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VIRGINIUS:

A Tragedy.

IN FIVE ACTS.

AS PERFORMED

AT THE

Theatre Royal, Covent Garden.

BY

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES, Esq.

London:
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1820.

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DEDICATION.

To WILLIAM MACREADY, Esq.

My Dear Sir,

What can I do less than dedicate this Tragedy to you? This is a question which you cannot answer; but I can—I cannot do less; and if I could do more, I ought, and would.

I was a perfect stranger to you: You read my play, and at once committed yourself respecting its merits. This, perhaps, is not saying much for your head—but it says a great deal for your heart; and that is the consideration, which above all others, makes me feel happy, and proud, in subscribing myself,

Your grateful friend, and Servant,

James Sheridan Knowles.

London, May 20, 1820.

THIS Play was written in great haste, and, no doubt, abounds in defects—but it is a question, whether it would have been less imperfect, had I taken a year to compose it. It was revolved and executed in about three months, in the midst of very numerous and arduous avocations. To a distinguished individual who suggested to me the idea of writing it, I shall ever feel grateful.

I owe the public an apology for the last act; and this is my apology—History gives two accounts of the manner of Appius's death: one, that he committed suicide; the other, that he was destroyed privately by the Tribunes. Had I selected for my catastrophe, the former incident, the character of the tyrant had stood too prominent; by adopting the latter, I should have violated the respect due to a Christian audience. After having excited such an interest for Virginius, it would have been indecent to represent him in the attitude of taking the law into his own hands. I therefore adopted the idea of his destroying Appius in a fit of temporary insanity, which gives the catastrophe the air of a visitation of Providence.

I am most sensible of the very great degree in which I am indebted to the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Theatre Royal, Covent-Garden; and I beg them to believe that I feel more than I can very readily express. To forget what I owe to the Theatre where my Play was first performed, would be ungrateful; and, under any circumstances, to omit the acknowledgment of it would be unprincipled and mean. I take, therefore, this opportunity of thanking also, the Company of the Glasgow Theatre.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Men.

Appius Claudius	*Decemvirs*	Mr. ABBOTT.
Spurius Oppius		Mr. WHITE.
Vibulanus		Mr. JEFFERIES.
Honorius	*Patricians*	Mr. NORRIS.
Valerius		Mr. VEDY.
Caius Claudius	*Clients to Appius*	Mr. CONNOR.
Marcus		Mr. CLAREMONT.
Dentatus	*A Veteran*	Mr. TERRY.
Virginius	*A Centurion*	Mr. MACREADY.
Numitorius	*His brother-in-law.*	Mr. EGERTON.
Icilius	*In love with Virginia*	Mr. C. KEMBLE.
Lucius	*Brother of Icilius*	Mr. COMER.
Publius	*Soldiers*	Mr. MEARS.
Decius		Mr. TREBY.
Sextus.		Mr. CRUMPTON.
Titus	*Citizens*	Mr. FAUCIT.
Servius		Mr. ATKINS.
Cneius		Mr. KING.

Women.

Virginia ..... *Daughter of Virginius* MISS FOOTE.
Servia ..... *Her Nurse.* ..... MRS. FAUCIT.
Female Slave ..... MRS. CHIPP.

Citizens, *Male and Female*—Soldiers, Lictors, &c.

SCENE, chiefly Rome.

The passages marked with inverted commas are omitted in the representation.

PROLOGUE,

By T. REYNOLDS, Esq.

Spoken by Miss Booth.

[*Speaking behind.*] Nay, Mr. Fawcett, give me leave, I pray,
The audience wait, and I must have my way. [*Enters*]
What! curb a woman's tongue!—As I'm alive,
The wretch would mar our old prerogative!
Ladies! by very dint of pertinacity,
Have I preserv'd the glory of loquacity.

Oh! could you gaze, as I am gazing now,
And see each man behind, with gather'd brow,
And clenched hand (tho' nought my spirit damps)
Beckoning, with threats, my presence, from the lamps:
Each, as I broke my way, declared how well,
His art could woo you—to be peaceable!
One is well robed—a second greatly shines,
In the nice balance, of *cast-iron* lines;
A third can sing—a fourth can touch your tears—
A fifth—"I'll see no more!"—a fifth appears,
Who hath been once in Italy, and seen Rome;
In short—there's quite a hubbub in the Green Room.
But I—a very woman—careless—light—
Fleet idly to your presence, this fair night;
And, craving your sweet pardon, fain would say
A kind word, for the poet, and his play.

To night, no idle nondescript, lays waste,
The fairy, and yet placid bower, of taste:
No story, piled with dark, and cumbrous fate,
And words, that stagger, under their own weight
But one of silent grandeur—simply said,
As tho' it were awaken'd from the dead!
It is a tale—made beautiful by years;—
Of pure, old, Roman sorrow—old in tears!
And those, you shed o'er it in childhood, may,
Still fall—and fall—for sweet Virginia!

Nor doth a crowned poet of the age,
Call the sweet spirits, from the historic page!
No old familiar dramatist, hath spun,
This tragic, antique web, to-night—but one,
An unknown author, in a sister land,
Waits, in young fear, the fiat of your hand.

ACT I.

SCENE FIRST.

A STREET IN ROME.

Enter SERVIUS *and* CNEIUS.

Servius. Carbo denied a hearing !

Cneius. Ay, and Marcellus cast into prison, because he sued a friend of one of the Decemvirs for a sum of money he had lent him.

Servius. And Appius resisted not? Appius ! that in the first Decemvirate was a god to the people.

Cne. Resisted not ! Nay, was most loud in favour of the decree; but hither comes Virginius, who interested himself so much in Carbo's affair. He looks a little heated. Is not that Titus he is speaking to? Stand aside, Master, and listen.

Enter VIRGINIUS *and* TITUS.

Virginius. Why did you make him Decemvir, and first Decemvir too?

Tit. We had tried him, and found him honest.

Virginius. And could you not have remained content? Why try him again to find him dishonest? Knew ye not he was a Patrician, and of the Claudian family?

Tit. He laid down the Consulate—

Virginius. Ha! ha! ha! to be elected into the Decemvirate, and he was so; and he laid down his office of Decemvir, to be re-elected into the Decemvirate, and he is so; ay, by Jupiter! and to the exclusion of his late colleagues! Did not Titus Genutius lay down the Consulate?

Tit. He did.

Virginius. Was he not next to Appius in the Decemvirate?

Tit. He was.

Virginius. Did you not find him honest?

Tit. We did find him honest.

Virginius. As honest as Appius Claudius?

Tit. Quite as honest.

Virginius. Quite as honest! And why not re-elect him Decemvir? Most sapient people! You re-elect Appius into the Decemvirate for his honesty, and you thrust Titus out of the Decemvirate—I suppose for his honesty also! Why, Appius was sick of the Decemvirate!

Servius. I never heard him say so.

Virginius. But he did say so—say so in my hearing, in presence of the senators, Valerius and Caius Claudius, and I don't know how many others. 'Twas known to the whole body of the Senate—not that he was sick, but that he said so. Yes! yes! he and his colleagues, he said, had done the work of the Republic for a whole year, and it was now but just to grant them a little repose, and appoint others to succeed them.

Tit. Well, well, we can only say he chang'd his mind.

Virginius. No, no, we needn't say that neither; as he had laboured in the Decemvirate, perhaps he thought he might as well repose in the Decemvirate.

Tit. I know not what he thought. He is Decemvir, and we made him so, and cannot help

ourselves. Fare you well, Virginius. Come, let's to the Forum. [*Exeunt Titus, Servius, and Cneius.*

Virginius. You cannot help yourselves! Indeed, you cannot;
You help'd to put your masters on your backs.
They like their seat, and make you show your paces;
They ride you—sweat you—curb you—lash you—and
You cannot throw them off with all your mettle!
But here comes one, whose share in giving you
To such unsparing riders, touches me
More nearly, for that I've an interest
In proving him a man of fair, and most
Erect integrity. Good day, Icilius.

Enter ICILIUS.

Icilius. Worthy Virginius! 'tis an evil day
For Rome, that gives her more convincing proof,
The thing she took for hope, is but a base
And wretched counterfeit! Our new Decemvirs
Are any thing but friends to justice and
Their country.

Virginius. You, Icilius, had a hand
In their election. You applied to me
To aid you with my vote, in the Comitia;
I told you then, and tell you now again,
I am not pleas'd when a Patrician bends
His head to a Plebeian's girdle! Mark me!
I'd rather he should stand aloof, and wear
His shoulder high—especially the nephew
Of Caius Claudius.

Icil. I would have pledg'd my life—

Virginius. 'Twas a high gage, and men have stak'd a higher
On grounds as poor as yours—their honour, boy!
Icilius, I have heard it all—your plans—
The understanding 'twixt the heads of the people—
Of whom, Icilius, you are reckon'd one, and

Worthily—and Appius Claudius—all—
'Twas every jot disclos'd to me.
Icil. By whom?
Virginius. Sicinius Dentatus.
Icil. He disclos'd it to you;
Sicinius Dentatus is a crabbed man.
Virginius. Sicinius Dentatus is an honest man!
There's not a worthier in Rome! How now?
Has he deceiv'd me? Do you call him liar?
My friend! my comrade! old Sicinius,
That has fought in six score battles?
Icil. Good Virginius,
Sicinius Dentatus is my friend—the friend
Of every honest man in Rome—a brave man—
A most brave man. Except yourself, Virginius,
I do not know a man I prize above
Sicinius Dentatus—yet he's a crabbed man.
Virginius. Yes, yes; he is a crabbed man.
Icil. A man
Who loves too much to wear a jealous eye.
Virginius. No, not a whit!—where there is double dealing.
You are the best judge of your own concerns;
Yet, if it please you to communicate
With me upon this subject, come and see me.
I told you, boy, I favour'd not this stealing
And winding into place. What he deserves,
An honest man dares challenge 'gainst the world—
But come and see me. Appius Claudius chosen
Decemvir, and his former colleagues, that
Were quite as honest as himself, not chosen—
No not so much as nam'd by him—who nam'd
Himself, and his new associates! Well, 'tis true,
Dog fights with dog, but honesty is not
A cur, doth bate his fellow—and e'en dogs,
By habit of companionship, abide
In terms of faith and cordiality—
But come and see me.

Icil. Appius comes !
The people still throng after him with shouts,
Unwilling to believe their Jupiter
Has mark'd them for his thunder. Will you stay,
And see the homage that they render him ?

Virginius. Not I ! Stay you ; and, as you made him, hail him ;
And shout, and wave your hand, and cry, long live
Our first and last Decemvir, Appius Claudius !
For he is first, and last, and every one !
Rome owes you much, Icilius—Fare you well—
I shall be glad to see you at my house.

[*Exit Virginius.*

Enter APPIUS CLAUDIUS—CLAUDIUS—SICINIUS—DENTATUS—LUCIUS—TITUS—SERVIUS—MARCUS, *and* CITIZENS *shouting.*

Tit. Long live our first Decemvir!
Long live Appius Claudius !
Most noble Appius ! Appius and the Decemvirate for ever ! (*Citizens shout.*)

App. My countrymen and fellow citizens,
We will deserve your favour.

Tit. You have deserv'd it,
And will deserve it.

App. For that end we named
Ourself Decemvir.

Tit. You could not have nam'd a better man.

Den. For his own purpose. (*Aside.*)

App. Be assur'd, we hold
Our power but for your good. Your gift it was ;
And gifts make surest debtors. Fare you well—
And, for your salutations, pardon me,
If I repay you only with an echo—
Long live the worthy citizens of Rome !

[*Exit Appius, &c. the people shouting.*

Den. That was a very pretty echo !—a most soft echo. I never thought your voices were half so sweet ! a most melodious echo ! I'd have you ever after make

your music before the Patricians' Palaces ; they give most exquisite responses !—especially that of Appius Claudius ! a most delicate echo !

Tit. What means Dentatus ?

Servius. He's ever carping—nothing pleases him.

Den. O ! yes—you please me—please me mightily, I assure you.—You are noble legislators, take most especial care of your own interests, bestow your votes most wisely too—on him who has the wit to get you into the humour ; and withal, have most musical voices—most musical—if one may judge by their echo.

Tit. Why, what quarrel have you with our choice? Could we have chosen better ?—I say they are ten honest Decemvirs we have chosen.

Den. I pray you name them me.

Tit. There's Appius Claudius, first Decemvir.

Den. Ay, call him the head; you are right. Appius Claudius, the head. Go on !

Tit. And Quintus Fabius Vibulanus.

Den. The body, that eats and drinks while the head thinks. Call him Appius's stomach. Fill him, and keep him from cold and indigestion, and he'll never give Appius the head-ache ! Well ?—There's excellent comfort in having a good stomach !—Well ?

Tit. There's Cornelius, Marcus Servilius, Minucius, and Titus Antonius.

Den. Arms, legs, and thighs !

Tit. And Marcus Rabuleius.

Den. He'll do for a hand, and as he's a senator, we'll call him the right-hand. We couldn't do less, you know, for a Senator ! Well ?

Luc. At least, you'll say we did well in electing Quintius Petilius, Caius Duellius, and Spurius Oppius, men of our order ! sound men ! "known sticklers for the people"—at least you'll say we did well in that !

Den. And who dares say otherwise? "Well!" one might as well say "ill" as "well." Well is the very skirt of commendation; next neighbour to that mire and gutter, "ill." "Well," indeed! you acted like yourselves! Nay, e'en yourselves could not have acted better! Why had you not elected them.—Appius would have gone without his left-hand, and each of his two feet.

Servius. Out! you are dishonest!

Den. Ha!

Servius. What would content you?

Den. A post in a hot battle! Out, you cur! Do you talk to me?

Citizen. [*from behind.*]

Down with him, he does nothing but insult the people.

(*The Crowd approach Dentatus, threateningly.*)

Icil. Stand back! Who'st that says down with Sicinius Dentatus? Down with him! 'Tis what the enemy could never do; and shall we do it for them? Who uttered that dishonest word? Who uttered it, I say? Let him answer a fitter, though less worthy mate, Lucius Icilius!

Citizens. Stand back, and hear Icilius!

Icil. What! hav'n't I voted for the Decemvirs, and do I snarl at his jests? Has he not a right to jest? the good, honest Sicinius Dentatus that, alone, at the head of the veterans, vanquished the Œqui for you. Has he not a right to jest? For shame! get to your houses! The worthy Dentatus! Cheer for him, if you are Romans! Cheer for him before you go! Cheer for him, I say!

[*Exeunt Citizens, shouting.*

Den. And now, what thanks do you expect from me, Icilius?

Icil. None.

Den. By Jupiter, young man, had you thus stepped before me in the heat of battle, I would have cloven you down—but I'm obliged to you, Icilius—and hark you! There's a piece of furniture in the house of a friend of mine, that's called Virginius, I think you've set your heart upon—dainty enough—yet not amiss for a young man to covet. Ne'er lose your hopes! He may be brought into the mind to part with it. As to these curs, I question which I value more, their fawnings, or their snarlings—I thank you, boy! Do you walk this way?—I am glad of it! Come—'Tis a noble Decemvirate you have chosen for us! Come! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE SECOND.

VIRGINIUS's HOUSE.

Enter VIRGINIUS *and* SERVIA.

Virginius. And is this all you have observ'd? I think
There's nothing strange in that. An L and an I
Twin'd with a V. Three very innocent letters
To have bred such mischief in thy brain, good Servia!
Come, read this riddle to me.
Servia. You may laugh
Virginius; but I'll read the riddle right,
The L doth stand for Lucius; and the I,
Icilius; which, I take it, will compose
Lucius Icilius.
Virginius. So it will, good Servia.

Servia. Then, for the V; why, that is plain Virginia.

Virginius. And now, what conjuration find you here?

Servia. What should I find but love? The maid's in love,
And it is with Icilius. Look, the wreath
Is made of roses, that entwines the letters.

Virginius. And this is all?

Servia. And is it not enough?
You'll find this figuring where e'er you look:
There's not a piece of dainty work she does—
Embroidery, or painting—not a task
She finishes, but on the skirt, or border,
In needle-work, or pencil, this, her secret,
The silly wench betrays.

Virginius. Go, send her to me—
Stay! Have you spoken to her of it?

Servia. I! Not I, indeed; I left that task to you—
Tho' once I asked her what the letters meant.
She laugh'd, and drew a scratch across them; but
Had scarce done so, ere her fair visage fell,
For grief that she had spoiled the cyphers—" and
A sigh came out, and then almost a tear;
And she did look, as piteous on the harm
That she had done, as she had done it to
A thing, had sense to feel it." Never after
She let me note her at work again.
She had good reason!

Virginius. Send her to me Servia. [*Exit Servia.*
There's something here, that looks as it would bring me
Anticipation of my wish. I think
Icilius loves my daughter—nay, I know it;
And such a man I'd challenge for her husband;—
And only waited, till her forward spring,
Put on, a little more, the genial likeness
Of colouring into summer, ere I sought
To nurse a flower, which, blossoming too early,

Too early often dies; "but if it springs
Spontaneous, and, unlooked for, woos our hand
To tend and cherish it, the growth is healthful;
And 'twere untimely, as unkind, to check it."
I'll ascertain it shortly—soft, she comes.

Enter VIRGINIA.

Virginia. Well, Father, what's your will?
Virginius. I wish'd to see you,
To ask you of your tasks—how they go on—
And what your masters say of you—what last
You did. I hope you never play
The truant?
Virginia. The truant! No, indeed, Virginius.
Virginius. I am sure you do not—kiss me!
Virginia. O! my Father
I am so happy, when you're kind to me!
Virginius. You are so happy when I'm kind to you!
Am I not always kind? I never spoke
An angry word to you in all my life,
Virginia! You are happy when I'm kind!
That's strange; and makes me think you have some reason,
To fear I may be otherwise than kind—
Is't so, my girl.
Virginia. Indeed I did not know
What I was saying to you!
Virginius. Why, that's worse
And worse! What! when you said your father's kindness
Made you so happy, am I to believe
You were not thinking of him?
Virginia. I———— (*greatly confused.*)
Virginius. Go, fetch me
The latest task you did. [*Exit Virginia.*
It is enough.
Her artless speech, like crystal, shows the thing
'Twould hide, but only covers. 'Tis enough!
She loves, and fears her father may condemn.

Virginia, (*re-entering with a painting.*)
Here, Sir.
Virginius. What's this?
Virginia. 'Tis Homer's history
Of great Achilles parting from Briseïis.
Virginius. You have done it well. The colouring is good,
The figures well design'd. 'Tis very well!—
Whose face is this you've given to Achilles?
Virginia. Whose face?
Virginius. I've seen this face! Tut! Tut! I know it
As well as I do my own, yet can't bethink me
Whose face it is!
Virginia. You mean Achilles' face?
Virginius. Did I not say so! 'Tis the very face
Of—No! No! Not of him. There's too much youth
And comeliness; and too much fire, to suit
The face of Sicinius Dentatus.
Virginia. O!
You surely never took it for his face!
Virginius. Why, no; for now I look again, I'd swear
You lost the copy ere you drew the head,
And, to requite Achilles for the want
Of his own face, contriv'd to borrow one
From Lucius Icilius. (*Enter Dentatus.*) My Dentatus,
I am glad to see you!
Den. 'Tis not for my news, then.
Virginius. Your news! What news?
Den. More violence and wrong from these new masters of ours, our noble Decemvirs—these demi-gods of good people of Rome! No man's property is safe from them. Nay, it appears we hold our wives and daughters but by the tenure of their will. Their liking is the law. The Senators themselves, scared at their audacious rule, withdraw themselves to

their villas and leave us to our fate. There are rumours, also, of new incursions by the Sabines.

Virginius. Rome never saw such days.

Den. And she'll see worse, unless I fail in my reckoning. Is that Virginia? I saw her not before. How does the fair Virginia? Why, she is quite a woman. I was just now wishing for a daughter.

Virginius. A plague you mean.

Den. I am sure you should not say so.

Virginia. Indeed he should not; and he does not say so,
Dentatus—not that I am not a plague,
But that he does not think me one, for all
I do to weary him. I am sure, Dentatus,
If to be thought to do well is to do well,
There's nothing I do ill; But it is far,
From that! for few things do I as I ought—
Yet every thing is well done with my father,
Dentatus.

Virginius. That's well done, is it not my friend? (*Aside*)
But if you had a daughter, what would you do with her?

Den. I'd give her to Icilius. I should have been just now torn to pieces, but for his good offices. The gentle citizens, that are driven about by the Decemvirs Lictors, like a herd of tame oxen, and with most beast-like docility, only low applauses to them in return, would have done me the kindness to knock my brains out; but the noble Icilius bearded them singly, and railed them into temper. Had I a daughter worthy of such a husband, he should have such a wife, and a patrician's dower along with her.

Virginius. I wish to speak with you, Dentatus. Icilius is a young man whom I honor, but so far only as his conduct gives me warrant. He has had, as thou knowest, a principal hand in helping us to our Decemvirs. It may be that he is what I would gladly think him; but I must see him clearly,

clearly, Dentatus. " If he has acted with the remotest understanding, touching the views of these new tyrants that we are cursed withal, I disclaim him as my friend! I cast him off for ever!"

[*Exit Virginius and Dentatus.*

Virginia. How is it with my heart? I feel as one
That has lost every thing, and just before
Had nothing left to wish for! He will cast
Icilius off!—I never told it yet;
But take of me, thou gentle air, the secret—
And ever after breathe more balmy sweet—
I love Icilius! " Yes, although to thee
I fear to tell it, that hast neither eye
To scan my looks, nor voice to echo me,
Nor e'en an o'er-apt ear to catch my words;
Yet, sweet invisible confidant, my secret
Once being thine—I tell thee, and I tell thee
Again—and yet again." I love Icilius!
He'll cast Icilius off!—not if Icilius
Approve his honour. That he'll ever do;
He speaks and looks, and moves a man of honour,
Or honour never yet spoke—look'd, or mov'd,
Or was a thing of earth. O, come Icilius;
Do but appear, and thou art vindicated.

ICILIUS, (*entering.*)

Virginia! sweet Virginia! sure I heard
My name pronounc'd. Was it by thee, Virginia?
Thou dost not answer? Then it was by thee—
O! wouldst thou tell me why thou nam'dst Icilius!

Virginia. My father is incens'd with thee. Dentatus
Has told him of the new Decemvirate,
How they abuse their office. You, he knows,
Have favoured their election, and he fears
May have some understanding of their plans.

Icil. He wrongs me then!

Virginia. I thank the gods!

Icil. For me !
Virginia? Do you thank the gods for me?
Your eye is moist—yet that may be for pity ;
Your hand doth tremble—that may be for fear ;
Your cheek is cover'd o'er with blushes ! What,
O what can that be for ?
Virginia. Icilius, leave me !
Icil. Leave thee, Virginia ? O ! a word—a word
Trembles upon my tongue, which, if it match
The thought that moves the now, and thou wilt let me
Pronounce that word, to speak that thought for thee,
I'll breathe—though I expire in the extacy
Of uttering it.
Virginia. Icilius, will you leave me ?
Icil. Love ! Love! Virginia ! Love ! If I have spoke
Thy thought aright, ne'er be it said again !
The heart requires more service than the tongue
Can, at its best, perform. My tongue hath serv'd
Two hearts—but, lest it should o'erboast itself,
Two hearts with but one thought. Virginia !
Virginia, speak—*(Virginia covers her face with her hands.)*
O, I have lov'd thee long :
So much the more extatic my delight,
To find thee mine at length.
Virginia. My secret's yours.
Keep it, and honour it, Icilius.

Enter VIRGINIUS *and* DENTATUS *behind.*

Virginius. Icilius here !
Virginia. I ask thee now to leave me.
Icilius. Leave thee ! who leaves a treasure he has coveted
So long, and found so newly ere he scans it
Again, and o'er again ; and asks and answers,
Repeats and answers, answers and repeats,
The half-mistrustful, half-assured question—
And is it mine indeed ?

Virginia. Indeed! indeed!
Now leave me.
Icilius. I must see thy father first,
And lay my soul before him.
Virginia. Not to-night.
Icil. Now worse than ever; dear Virginia;
Can I endure his doubts; I'll lay my soul
Naked before him—win his friendship quite,
Or lose myself for ever!
[*Going, is met by Virginius.*
Virginius. Stop, Icilius!
Thou seest that hand? It is a Roman's, boy;
'Tis sworn to liberty—It is the friend
Of honour.—Dost thou think so?
Icil. Do I think
Virginius owns that hand?
Virginius Then you'll believe
It has an oath deadly to tyranny,
And is the foe of falsehood! By the gods,
Knew it the lurking place of treason, though
It were a brother's heart, 'twould drag the caitiff
Forth. Dar'st thou take that hand?
Icil. I dare, Virginius.
Virginius. Then take it! Is it weak in thy embrace?
Returns it not thy gripe? Thou wilt not hold
Faster by it, than it will hold by thee!
I overheard thee say, thou was't resolv'd
To win my friendship quite---Thou cans't not win
What thou hast won already! You will stay
And sup with us to-night.
Dent. To be sure he will!
Virginius. And, hark you, Sir,
At your convenient time, appoint a day
Your friends and kinsmen may confer with me---
There is a bargain I would strike with you.
Come, to the supper-room. Do you wait for me,
To lead Virginia in, or will you do it?
Come on, I say; come on. Your hand, Dentatus.
[*Exeunt.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE FIRST.

A STREET.

Enter PUBLIUS *and* SEXTUS.

Pub. This way ! We muster at the Flaminian gate.

Sext. Shall we not wait for Decius ?

Pub. No ; were he ten times Decius.—They'll have already begun their march. Come on !

Enter NUMITORIUS.

Num. Do you belong to the fourth legion ?

Pub. We do.

Num. They are upon their march, then.

Pub. I told you so—Come on ! come on !

[*Exeunt Soldiers.*

Enter LUCIUS.

Luc. Numitorius, what soldiers were those that just now parted from you ?

Num. Soldiers hastening to overtake the army, that's now upon its march.

Luc. 'Tis all confirmed then ; the Sabines are in force upon our borders.

Num. I pray you tell me something new ! Know you not the Senate has met, and the Decemvirs have come off triumphant in spite of all opposition ?

Luc. Should they have been opposed in such a strait as this ?

Num. Aye, should they. They dared not have armed a single citizen without the order of the Senate ; which, had they not obtained, the country would have been left naked to the foe, and then they had been forced to make room for more popular magistrates.

Luc. Why, were they not opposed then ?

Num. Did not I tell you they were opposed, Caius Claudius, Appius's own uncle, and Honorius, that noble senator, opposed them ; and it was like to go against them, but for the brawling insolence of Spurius Oppius, and the effrontery of the head Decemvir, backed by the young Patricians.

Luc. So they are empowered to take up arms ?

Num. To be sure they are ; and they have done so.—One body has already march'd, and by this time, no doubt, has come to blows with the enemy. The levy is still proceeding. All the Decemvirs, but Appius, take the field. He remains in Rome to keep good order that is the violater of all order. Why, where have you been, to have felt no movement of so great and wide a stir ? Your brother meets Virginius at his house to-day.—Come with me thither, for you I know are bid.—Lucius, there's no huzzaing for your Decemvirs now.—Come on, we have outstaid the hour. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE SECOND.

VIRGINIUS's HOUSE.

Enter VIRGINIUS, ICILIUS, LUCIUS, *and Others.*

Virginius. Welcome, Icilius! Welcome, friends! Icilius,
I did design to speak with you of feasting
And merriment, but war is now the word;
One that unlovingly keeps time with mirth,
Unless war's own—whene'er the battle's won,
And safe carousing, comrades drink to victory!
Icil. Virginius! have you chang'd your mind?
Virginius. My mind?
What mind? How now! Are you that boy, Icilius.
You set your heart so earnestly upon
A dish of poor confections, that to balk you
Makes you look blank! I did design to feast you
Together with your friends—The times are chang'd—
The march, the tent, the fight becomes us now!
Icil. Virginius!
Virginius. Well?
Icil. Virginius!
Virginius. How the boy
Reiterates my name.
Icil. There's not a hope
I have, but is the client of Virginius.
Virginius. Well, well! I only meant to put it off;
We'll have the revel yet! the board shall smoke!
The cup shall sparkle, and the jest shall soar
And mock us from the roof! Will that content you?
Not till the war be done tho'—Yet, ere then,
Some tongue, that now needs only wag, to make
The table ring, may have a tale to tell
So petrifying, that it cannot utter it!

I'll make all sure, that you may be my guest
At any rate—altho' you should be forc'd
To play the host for me and feast yourself.
Look here, (*shows a parchment to Icilius.*)
How think you? Will it meet the charge?
Will it not do? We want a witness tho'!
I'll bring one; whom, if you approve, I'll sign
The bond. I'll wait upon you instantly. [*Exit.*

Luc. How feel you now, Icilius?

Icil. Like a man
Whom the next moment makes, or quite unmakes.
With the intensity of exquisite
Suspense, my breathing thickens, and my heart,
Beats heavily, and with remittant throb
As like to lose its action—See! my hope
Is bless'd! I live! I live!

Enter VIRGINIUS *conducting* VIRGINIA, *with* NUMITORIUS.

Virginius. You are my witnesses,
That this young creature I present to you,
I do pronounce—my profitably cherish'd,
And most deservedly beloved child;
My daughter, truly filial—both in word;
And act—yet even more in act than word:
And—for the man who seeks to win her love,—
A virgin from whose lips, a soul as pure
Exhales, as ere responded to the blessing
Breath'd in a parent's kiss (*kissing her.*) Icilius
(*Icilius rushes towards Virginius and kneels.*)
Since
You are upon your knee young man, look up;
And lift your hands to heaven—You will be all
Her father has been—added unto all
A lover would be!

Icilius. All that man should be
To woman, I will be to her!

Virginius. The oath
Is register'd! Didst thou but know, young man,
How fondly I have watch'd her, since the day
Her mother died, and left me to a charge
Of double duty bound—how she hath been
My ponder'd thought, by day—my dream, by night!
My prayer, my vow, " my offering, my praise"
My sweet companion, pupil, tutor, child—
Thou would'st not wonder, that my drowning eye,
And choking utterance, upbraid my tongue
That tells thee, she is thine!—Icilius,
I do betroth her to thee; let but the war
Be done—you shall espouse her. Friends, a word!
[*Virginius and the rest retire.*
Icilius. Virginia! my Virginia! I am all
Dissolv'd—o'erpower'd with the munificence
Of this auspicious hour—And thou, nor mov'st
Nor look'st—nor speak'st—to bless me with a sign
Of sweet according joy!—I love thee, but
To make the happy! If to make thee so
Be bliss denied to me—lo, I release
The gifted hand that I would faster hold,
Than wretches, bound for death, would cling to life—
If thou would'st take it back—then take it back.
Virginia. I take it back—to give it thee again!
Icilius. O help me to a word will speak my bliss,
Or I am beggar'd—No! there is not one!
There cannot be; for never man had bliss
Like mine to name.
Virginia. " Thou dost but beggar me
Icilius, when thou mak'st thyself a bankrupt;
Placing a value on me far above
My real little worth."—I'd help thee to
A hundred words; each one of which, would far
O'er-rate thy gain, and yet no single one
Rate over high!
Icilius. Thou could'st not do it! No;
Thou could'st not do it! Every term of worth
Writ down and doubl'd, then the whole sum'd up,

Would leave with thee a rich remainder still!—
Pick from each rarer pattern of thy sex
Her rarest charm, till thou hast every charm
Of soul and body, that can blend in woman,
I would out-paragon the paragon
With thee!

Virginia. "And if thou would'st, I'd find thee, for
Thy paragon, a mate—if that can be
A mate which doth transcend the thing, 'tis ta'en
To match—would make thy paragon look poor,
And I would call that so o'ermatching mate
Icilius."

Icilius. No! I will not let thee win
On such a theme as this!

Virginia. Nor will I drop
The controversy, that the richer makes me
The more I lose.

Icilius. My sweet Virginia,
We do but lose and lose, and win and win;
"Playing for nothing but to lose and win."
Then let us stop the game—and thus I stop it.
(*Kisses her.*)

Re-enter VIRGINIUS, *and the Others.*

Virginius. Witness, my friends, that seal! Observe, it is
A living one! It is Icilius' seal;
And stamp'd upon as true and fair a bond—
Tho' it receive the impress blushingly—
As ever signet kiss'd! Are all content?
Speak else! She is thy free affianc'd wife,
Thou art her free affianc'd husband! Come,
We have o'erdrawn our time—Farewell, Virginia;
Thy future husband for a time must be,
Bellona's. To thy tasks again, my child;
Be thou the bride of study for a time.
Farewell!

Virginia. My Father!

Virginius. May the gods protect thee.

Virginia. My Father.
Virginius. Does the blood forsake thy cheek?
Come to my arms once more! Remember, girl,
The first and foremost debt a Roman owes,
Is to his country; and it must be paid,
If need be, with his life—Why, how you hold me!
Icilius, take her from me! Hoa! Within!
Within there! Servia! (*Enter Servia.*)
Look to your child!
Come, boy.
Icilius. Farewell, Virginia.
Virginius. Take her in!
Virginia. The gods be with thee my Icilius—
Father,
The gods be with thee—and Icilius.
Virginius. I swear a battle might be fought and won
In half the time! Now, once for all, farewell;
Your sword and buckler, boy! The foe! The foe!
Does he not tread on Roman ground! Come on!
Come on, charge on him! drive him back! or die!
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE THIRD.

APPIUS's HOUSE.

Enter APPIUS.

It was a triumph; the achieving which,
O'erpaid the risk was run—and that was great.
They have made trial of their strength, and learn'd
Its value from defeat. The Senate knows
Its masters now; and the Decemvirate,
To make its reign eternal, only wants
Its own decree, which little pains will win.

Ere this, the foe has, for his mad invasion,
Been paid with chastisement. "Retir'd within
His proper limits, leisure waits upon us
To help us to the recompence, decreed
To our noble daring, who have set ourselves
In such high seats, as at our feet array
The wealth, and power, and dignity of Rome
In absolute subjection! Tyranny!
How godlike is thy port! Thou giv'st, and tak'
And ask'st no other leave, than what thy own
Imperial will accords. Jove does no more!"
Now Claudius—

Enter CLAUDIUS.

Claud. We have suffer'd a defeat!
App. What! The Decemvirs' fly!
Claud. The soldiers fight
With only half a heart. "The other half
Looks on, and cares not which side proves the winner."
App. Then decimate them. Traitors! Recreants!
Why, we shall have them at our very doors!
Have we lost ground, my Claudius?
Claud. None, except
What we've retrac'd in fame. We strove to teach
The enemy their road lay backwards, but
They would not turn their faces for us. Each
Retains his former line.

Enter MARCUS.

App. What news?
Marc. The Œqui
Still press upon us. Rumours are afloat
Of new disasters, which the common cry,
Be sure, still multiplies and swells. Dentatus,
That over-busy, crabbed veteran,
Walks up and down among the people, making

Your plans his theme of laughter. Naught he stints
That may reflect you in an odious light,
And lower the Decemvirate.

App. A dungeon
Would do good service to him! Once within,
Strangling were easy! We must stop his mouth—
"Unwholesome food—or liquor"—Where was he
When last you heard him?

Marc. In the Forum.

App. So!
He is past service, is he not? Some way
To clear the city of him. Come, we'll hear him,
And answer him, and silence him! 'Tis well
The dog barks forth his spleen; it puts us on
Our guard against his bite. Come, to the Forum!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE FOURTH.

THE FORUM.

Enter DENTATUS *and* CITIZENS.

Tit. What's to be done?

Den. We'll be undone—that's to be done.

Ser. We'll do away with the Decemvirate.

Den. You'll do away with the Decemvirate?—The Decemvirate will do away with you! You'll do away with yourselves! Do nothing. The enemy will do away with both of you. In another month, a Roman will be a stranger in Rome. A fine pass we are come to, Masters!

Tit. But something must be done.

Den. Why, what would you have? You shout and clap your hands, as if it were a victory

you heard of; and yet you cry---Something must be done! Truly I know not what that something is, unless it be to make you General. How say you, Masters?

Ser. We'd follow any man that knew how to lead us, and would rid us of our foes, and the Decemvirate together.

Den. You made these Decemvirs! You are strangely discontented with your own work! And you are over-cunning workmen too---You put your materials so firmly together, there's no such thing as taking them asunder! What yon build, you build —except it be for your own good.—There you are bunglers at your craft. Ha! ha! ha! I cannot but laugh to think how you toiled, and strained, and sweated, to rear the stones of the building one above another, when I see the sorry faces you make at it!

Tit. But tell us the news again.

Den. Is it so good? Does it so please you? Then prick your ears again, and listen.—We have been beaten again—beaten back on our own soil. Rome has seen its haughty masters fly before chastisement, like slaves---returning cries for blows---and all this of your Decemvirs, gentlemen.

1*st Cit.* Huzza for it again! (*The people shout.*)

2*nd Cit.* Hush! Appius comes.

Den. And do you care for that? You that were, just now, within a stride of taking him and his colleagues by the throat? You'll do away with the Decemvirs, will you! And let but one of them appear, you dare not, for your life, but keep your spleen within your teeth! Listen to me, now! I'll speak the more for Appius—(*Enter Appius, Claudius, and Marcus, preceded by Lictors.*)—I say, to the eternal infamy of Rome, the foe has chased her sons, like hares, on their own soil, where they should prey like lions—and so they would, had they not keepers to tame them.

App. What's that you are saying to the people, Sicinius Dentatus?

Den. I am regaling them with the news.

App. The news?

Den. Ay, the news—the newest that can be had; and the more novel, because unlooked for. Who ever thought to see the eagle in the talons of the kite?

App. It is not well done in you, Dentatus, to chafe a sore. It makes it rankle. If your surgery has learned no better, it should keep its hands to itself! You have very little to do, to busy yourself after this fashion.

Den. I busy myself as I like, Appius Claudius.

App. I know you do, when you labour to spread disaffection among the people, and bring the Decemvirs into contempt.

Den. The Decemvirs bring themselves into contempt.

App. Ha! dare you say so?

Den. Dare! I have dared cry "Come on!" to a cohort of bearded warriors—Is it thy smooth face should appal me? Dare! it never yet flurried me to use my arm—Shall I not, think you, be at my ease, when I but wag my tongue? Dare, indeed!

App. Your grey hairs should keep company with honester speech!

Den. Shall I show you, Appius, the company they are wont to keep, Look here! and here (*uncovering his forehead and shewing scars.*) These are the vouchers of honest deeds—such is the speech with which my grey hairs keep company. I tell you, to your teeth, the Decemvirs bring themselves into contempt.

App. What, are they not serving their country at the head of her armies?

Den. They'd serve her better in the body of her armies! I'd name for thee, a hundred Centurions

would make better generals. A common soldier of a year's active service, would take his measures better. Generals! Our generals were wont to teach us how to win battles. Tactics are changed—Your generals instruct us how to lose them.

App. Do you see my lictors?

Den. There are twelve of them.

App. What, if I bid them seize thee?

Den. They'd blush to do it.

App. Why now, Dentatus, I begin to know you;
I fancied you a man that lov'd to vent
His causeless anger in an under breath,
And speak it in the ear—and only then
When there was safety! Such a one, you'll own,
Is dangerous; and, to be trusted as
A friend or foe, unworthy. But I see
You rail to faces—Have you not so much
Respect for Appius as to take him by
The hand; when he confesses you have some
Pretence to quarrel with his colleagues plans,
And find fault with himself? Which, yet you'll own,
May quite as well be kindly done, Dentatutus,
As harshly—Had you only to myself,
Declar'd your discontents, the more you had rail'd
The more I should have thank'd you.

Den. Had I thought——

App. And have you been campaigning then so long,
And prosperously? and mistrust you Sicinius,
That a young scarless soldier, like myself,
Would listen to your tutoring? See, now,
How much you have mistaken me! Dentatus,
In a word—Can you assist the generals;
And will you?

Den. I have all the will—but as
For the ability—

App. Tut! Tut! Dentatus
You vex me now! This coyness sits not well on you.

You know as well as I, you have as much
Ability as will. I would not think you
A man that lov'd to find fault, but to find fault!
Surely the evil you complain of, you
Would lend a hand to remedy! See, now,
'Tis fairly put to you—what say you?
Den. Appius!
You may use me as you please.
App. And that will be,
As you deserve! I'll send you, as my Legate,
To the army! (*Shout from the people.*) Do you
hear your friends, Dentatus?
A lucky omen that! Away! Away!
Apprise your house—prepare for setting out.
I'll hurrry your credentials—Minutes now
Rate high as hours! Assist my colleagues with
Your counsel; if their plans displease you, why
Correct them! change them! utterly reject them;
And if you meet obstruction—notice me,
And I will push it by—There now! Your hand!—
Again! Away! All the success attend you,
That Appius, wishes you.
Den. Success is from
The Gods; whose hand soe'er it pleases them
To send it by—I know not what success
'Tis Appius' wish they send;—but this I know—
I am a soldier; and, as a soldier, I
Am bound to serve. All the success I ask,
Is that which benefits my country, Appius;
[*Exit Dentatus.*
App. You have serv'd her overlong! (*aside*) Now
for our causes.

Appius ascends the Tribunal.

Claud. (*to Marcus.*) Do you see the drift of
this?
Marc. I cannot guess it.
Claud. Nor I.

App. (*to a Plebeian*) Are you the suitor in this cause?
Speak!
Plebeian. Noble Appius, if there's law in Rome
To right a man most injur'd, to that law
Against yon proud Patrician I appeal.
App. No more of that, I say? Because he's rich
And great; you call him proud! 'Tis not unlike,
Because you're poor and mean; you call yourself
Injur'd—Relate your story; and so, please you,
Spare epithets!
Plebeian. Grant me a minutes pause,
I shall begin.
(*Virginia at this moment crosses the stage with her Nurse, and is met by Numitorius who holds her in conversation; Appius rivets his eyes upon her.*)
Num. You have heard the news?
Virginia. What news? dear uncle!
Num. Step
Aside with me, I'll tell you.
(*Takes her a little farther from the tribunal.*)
App. Can it be
A mortal that I look upon?
Virginia. They are safe!
I thank the gods!
App. Her eyes look up to heaven
Like something kindred to it—rather made
To send their glances down, and fill the earth
With worship and with gratulation—What
A thrill runs up and down my veins; and all throughout me!
Plebeian. Now, most noble Appius!
App. Stop;
Put off the cause, I cannot hear it now!
Attend to morow! An oppressive closeness
Allows me not to breath—Lictors! make clear
The ground about the Rostrum!
(*Descends and approaches Claudius with precipitation.*)

Claudius! Claudius!—
Marcus, go you and summon my physician
To be at home before me [*Exit Marcus.*] Claudius!
Claudius! there! there!
Virginia. You send a messenger to-night?
App. Paint me that smile! I never saw a smile
'Till now. My Claudius, is she not a wonder?
I know not whether in the state of girlhood
Or womanhood to call her.—'Twixt the two
She stands as that were loth to lose her, this
To win her most impatient. The young year,
Trembling and blushing 'midst the striving kisses
Of parting spring, and meeting summer, seems
Her only parallel!
Num. 'Tis well! I'll send
Your father word of this. But have you not
A message to Icilius?
App. Mark you, Claudius?
There is a blush!—I must possess her.
Virginia. Tell him,
I think upon him—Farewell Numitrious!
[*Exit with Servia.*
Num. Farewell, Virginia.
Claud. Master, will you tell me
The name of that young maiden?
Num. She is call'd
Virginia, daughter of Virginius;
A Roman citizen, and a centurion
In the army.
Claudius. Thank you; she is very like
The daughter of a friend of mine. Farewell.
Num. Farewell! [*Exit.*
App. I burn, my Claudius! brain and heart—
There's not
A fibre in my body but's on fire!
With what a gait she moves! Such was not Hebe,
Or Jupiter had sooner lost his heaven,
Than changed his cup-bearer—a step like that

The rapture glowing clouds might well bear up,
And never take for human! Find me, Claudius,
Some way to compass the possession of her.
Claud. 'Tis difficult. Her father's of repute;
The highest of his class.
App. I guessed it! Friends
Are ever friends, except when friends are needed.
Claud. Nay, Appius!—
App. If thou can'st not give me hope,
Be dumb!
Claud. A female agent may be used
With some success.
App. How? How?
Claud. To tamper with
That woman that attends her.
App. Set about it.
Claud. Could she but be induc'd to help you to
A single meeting with her.
App. Claudius! Claudius!
Effect but that!
Claud. I'll instantly about it.
App. Spare not my gold—nor stop at promises.
I will fulfil them fast as thou can'st make them.
To purchase such a draught of extacy
I'd drain a kingdom—Set about it, Claudius!
Away! I will not eat, nor drink, nor sleep,
Until I hear from thee!
Claud. Depend upon me!
App. I do, my Claudius, for my life—my life!
[*Exeunt severally.*

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE FIRST.

APPIUS'S HOUSE.

APPIUS—(*Entering.*)

It is not love, if what I've felt before
And call'd by such a name, be love—a thing
That took its turn—that I could entertain
Put off, or humour—'tis some other thing ;
Or if the same, why in some other state—
Or I am not the same—or it hath found
Some other part of sensibility
More quick, whereon to try its power, and there
Expends it all ! Now, Claudius, your success ?

Enter CLAUDIUS.

Claud. Nothing would do, yet nothing left undone !
She was not to be purchas'd.
App. Did she guess—
Claud. She could not,
So guarded was my agent ; who describ'd you
A man of power, of noble family,
And regal fortune—one that ask'd not what
His pleasures cost—no further made disclosure.

App. And did it nothing move her, Claudius?
Claud. Nothing.
The more my agent urg'd, the more the shrunk
And wither'd hag grew callous; further press'd,
And with more urgent importuning, ire
And scorn, in imprecations and invectives
Vented upon the monster (as she call'd him)
That would pollute her child, compell'd my advocate
To drop the suit she saw was hopeless.
App. Now
Had I a friend indeed!
Claud. Has Appius need
To search for such a friend, and Claudius by him?
App. Friends ever are provisionally friends
Friends for so far—Friends just to such a point
And then "farewell!" friends with an understanding—
As should the road be pretty safe—the sea
Not over-rough, and so on—friends of *ifs*
And *buts*—no friends!—O could I find the man
Would be a simple, thorough-going friend.
Claud. I thought you had one, Appius.
App. So thought Appius,
Till Appius thought upon a test of friendship,
He fears he would not give unto himself,
Could he be Appius' friend.
Claud. Then Appius has
A truer friend than Appius is to Appius.
I'll give that test!
App. What! you'd remove her father
And that Icilius whom you told me of?
Claud. Count it as done.
App. My Claudius, is it true?
Can I believe it? art thou such a friend,
That, when I look'd for thee to stop and leave me,
I find thee keeping with me, step by step;
And even in thy loving eagerness

Outstriding me? I do not want thee, Claudius,
To soil thy hand with their Plebeian blood.
Claud. What would'st thou, then?
App. I was left guardian to thee—
Claud. Thou wast.
App. Among the various property
Thy father left, were many female slaves.
Claud. Well?
App. It were easy for thee, were it not?
To forge a tale that one of them confess'd
She had sold a female infant (and of course
Thy slave) unto Virginius' wife, who pass'd it
Upon Virginius as his daughter, which
Supposititious offspring is this same
Virginia?
Claud. I conceive you.
App. To induce
The woman to confirm your tale, would ask
But small persuasion. Is it done?
Claud. This hour.
I know the school, my Appius, where Virginia
Pursues her studies; thither Ill repair,
And seize her as my slave at once. Do thou
Repair to thy tribunal, whither, should
Her friends molest me in the attempt, I'll bring her
And plead my cause before thee.
App. Claudius! Claudius!
How shall I pay thee? O, thou noble friend!
Power, fortune, life, whate'er belongs to Appius,
Reckon as thine! Away, away, my Claudius!
[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE SECOND.

A STREET IN ROME.

Enter LUCIUS, *meeting* TITUS, SERVIUS, *and* CNEIUS.

Luc. Well, Masters, any news of Sicinius Dentatus from the camp, how he was received by the Decemvirs?

Tit. He was received well by the Decemvirs.

Cne. It wasn't then for the love they bear him.

Tit. But they expect he'll help them to return the cuffs they have gotten from the enemy.

Servius. Do you wish for a victory?

Tit. Yes, if Dentatus wins it. 'Tis to our credit, Masters—He's one of us.

Servius. And is not Spurius Oppius one of us?

Tit. He is; but he is in league with the patricians—"that is, the patrician Decemvirs." He is but half a plebeian, and that is the worse half.—"The better half he threw away when he became half a patrician." I never lik'd your half-and-half gentry; they generally combine the bad of both kinds, without the good of either.

Servius. Well, we shall have news presently. Icilius, our late tribune, has just arrived with despatches from the camp. I met him passing through the Forum, and asked him what news he brought? He answered, none; but added, we might look for news of another kind than what we had been lately accustomed to hear. (*A shriek without.*)

Cne. What's that?

Tit. Look yonder, Masters! See!

Servius. 'Tis Appius's client dragging a young woman along with him.

Tit. Let us stand by each other, Masters, and prevent him.

Enter CLAUDIUS *dragging along* VIRGINIA, *followed by Servia and others.*

Servia. Help! help! help!
Luc. Let go your hold!
Claud. Stand by!
She is my slave!
Servia. His slave? Help! help! His slave?---
He looks more like a slave than she! Good Masters!
Protect the daughter of Virginius!
Luc. Release the maid.
Tit. Forbear this violence.
Claud. I call for the assistance of the laws;
She is my slave.
Servia. She is my daughter, Masters,
My foster-daughter; and her mother was
A free-born woman—and her father is
A citizen, a Roman---good Virginius,
As I said before--Virginius, the Centurion,
Whom all of you must know.---Help! help!
I say,
You see she cannot speak to help herself;
Speak for her, Masters---help her, if you're men!
Tit. Let go your hold.
Claud. Obstruct me at your peril.
Luc. We'll make you, if you will not.
Claud. Let me pass.
Servius. Let go your hold, once more.
Claud. Gook Masters! patience---
Hear me, I say---She is my slave---I wish not
To use this violence, my friends; but may not
A master seize upon his slave?---Make way,
Or such of you as are dissatisfied,

Repair with me to the Decemvir.—Come,
I only want my right!
Tit. Come on then!
Servius. Ay,
To the Decemvir!
Servia. Run, run for Numitorius—alarm our neighbours!—Call out Icilius's friends!—I shall go mad! Help! help! help! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE THIRD.

THE FORUM.

Enter APPIUS, *preceded by Lictors.*

App. Will he succeed?—Will he attempt it?—
Will he
Go through with it?—(*Looking out*)—No sign—I almost wish
He had not undertaken it; yet wish
More than I wish for life, he may accomplish
What he has undertaken. O! the pause
That precedes action. It is vacancy
That o'erweighs action's substance. What I fear
Is, that his courage can't withstand her tears;
That will be sure to try and succour her.
Pointing, as 'twere, to every charm, and pleading
With melting eloquence. I hear a sound
As of approaching clamour—and the rush
Of distant feet—He comes! I must prepare
For his reception. (*Appius ascends the tribunal. Claudius enters still holding Virgina, followed by Servia, women and citizens.*)
Claud. Do not press upon me;
Here's the Decemvir—he will satisfy you,

Whether a master has a right or not
To seize his slave when he finds her.
Servia. She is no slave
Of thine! She never was a slave! Thou slave!
To call her by that name---ay! threaten me!
She is a free-born maid, and not a slave,
Or never was a free-born maid in Rome!
O! you shall dearly answer for it!
App. Peace!
What quarrel's this? Speak, those who are aggriev'd.

Enter NUMITORIUS.

Where is Virginia---Wherefore do you hold
That maiden's hand?
Claud. Who asks the question?
Num. I! Her uncle Numitorius!
Claud. Numitorius, you think yourself her uncle---Numitorius
No blood of yours flows in her veins, to give you
The title you would claim. Most noble Appius!
If you sit here for justice---as I think
You do, attend not to the clamour of
This man, who calls himself this damsel's *uncle*
She is my property---was born beneath
My father's roof, whose slave her mother was,
Who (as I can establish past dispute)
Sold her an infant to Virginius' wife,
Who never had a child, and heavily
Revolv'd her barrenness. My slave I have found
And seiz'd---as who that finds his own (no matter
How long so ever miss'd) should fear to take it?
If they oppose my claim, they may produce
Their counter-proofs and bring the cause to trial!
But till they prove mine own is not mine own---
(An undertaking somewhat perilous)
Mine own I shall retain---yet giving them
Should they demand it, what security
They please for re-producing her.

App. Why that
Would be but reasonable.
Num. Reasonable!
Claudius!—(*with much vehemence—recollects himself*)
He's but a mask upon the face
Of some more powerful contriver. (*aside*) Appius,
My niece's father, is from Rome thou know'st,
Serving his country. Is it not unjust,
In the absence of a citizen, to suffer
His right to his own child to be disputed?
Grant us a day to fetch Virginius,
That he himself may answer this most foul
And novel suit—Meanwhile to me belongs
The custody of the maid—her uncle's house
Can better answer for her honour than
The house of Claudius. 'Tis the law of Rome
Before a final sentence, the defendant
In his possession is not to sustain
Disturbance from the plaintiff.
Tit. A just law.
Servius. And a most reasonable demand.
All the Cits. Ay! Ay! Ay!
App. Silence, you Citizens; will you restrain
Your tongues, and give your magistrate permission
To speak? The law is just—most reasonable—
I fram'd that law myself—I will protect
That law!
Tit. "Most noble Appius!"
Servius. "A most just decree!"
All the Cits. "Ay! Ay!"
App. "Will you be silent? Will you please to wait
For my decree, you most untractable
And boisterous citizens! I do repeat it,"
I fram'd that law myself and will protect it.
But are you, Numitorius, here defendant?
That title, none but the reputed father
Of the young woman has a right to—How

Can I commit to thee what may appear
The plaintiff's property ; and if not his,
Still is not thine ? I'll give thee till to-morrow
Ere I pass a final judgment—But the girl
Remains with Claudius, who shall bind himself
In such security as you require,
To re-produce her at the claim of him
Who calls her daughter—This is my decree.

Num. A foul decree.—Shame ! shame !

Servius. Aye, a most foul decree.

Cne. A villainous decree.

Servius. Most villainous.

Servia. Good citizens, what do you with our weapons,
When you should use your own ? Your hands !—your hands !—
He shall not take her from us.
Gather round her,
And if he touch her, be it to his cost ;
And if ye see him touch her, never more
Expect from us your titles—never more
Be husbands, brothers, lovers, at our mouths,
Or any thing that doth imply the name
Of men—except such men as men should blush for.

App. Command your wives and daughters, citizens,
They quit the Forum.

Servia. They shall not command us,
That care not to protect us.

App. Take the girl,
If she is yours.

Claud. Stand by,

Virginia. O help me ! help me !

Icil. (*entering*) Virginia's voice.—Virginia !
(*Rushes to her.*)

Virginia. O, Icilius ! (*Falls fainting in his arms.*)

Icil. Take her, good Numitorius.

App. You had better

Withdraw, Icilius; the affair is judged.
Claud. I claim my slave.
Icil. Stand back, thou double slave!
Touch her, and I will tear thee, limb from limb,
Before thy master's face.—She is my wife,
My life, my heart, my heart's blood.—Touch her
With but a look——
App. My Lictors, there, advance!
See that Icilius quits the Forum.—Claudius,
Secure your slave.
Icil. Lictors, a moment pause
For your own sakes. Do not mistake these arms;
Think not the strength of any common man
Is that they feel. They serve a charmed frame,
The which a power pervades, that ten times trebles
The natural energy of each single nerve
To sweep you down as reeds.
App. Obey my orders!
Icil. Appius! before I quit the Forum, let me
Address a word to you.
App. Be brief, then!
Icil. I'st not enough you have depriv'd us Appius.
Of the two strongest bulwarks to our liberties
Our tribunes and our privilege of appeal
To the assembly of the people?—Cannot
The honour of the Roman maids be safe?
Thou know'st this virgin is betroth'd to me,
Wife of my hope—Thou shalt not cross my hope
And I retain my life—attempt it not!—
I stand among my fellow citizens,
His fellow-soldiers hem Virginius round,
Both men and gods are on our side; but grant
I stood alone, with nought but virtuous love
To hearten me—alone would I defeat
The execution of thy infamous
Decree! I'll quit the Forum now, but not
Alone—my love!—my wife! my free-born maid
The virgin standard of my pride and manhood

" Of peerless motto!---rich and fresh, and shining,
And of device most rare and glorious"---
I'll bear off safe with me---unstain'd---untouch'd
App. Your duty, Lictors---Claudius, look to your right.
Icil. True citizens!
Tit. Down with the traitor!
Ser. Down with him—slay him!

[*The Lictors and Claudius are driven back; Claudius takes refuge at Appius's feet, who has descended and throws up his arms as a signal to both parties to desist---whereupon the people retire a little.*]

App. So, friends! we thank you that you don't deprive us
Of every thing; but leave your magistrates,
At least their persons, sacred---their decrees,
It seems, you value as you value straws,
And in like manner break them. Wherefore stop
When you have gone so far? You might, methinks,
As well have kill'd my client at my feet,
As threaten him with death before my face!
Rise, Claudius! I perceive Icilius' aim:—
He labours to restore the tribuneship
By means of a sedition. We'll not give him
The least pretence of quarrel. We shall wait
Virginius's arrival 'till to-morrow.
His friends take care to notice him---The camp's
But four hours journey from the city. 'Till
To-morrow, then, let me prevail with you
To yield up something of your right, and let
The girl remain at liberty.
Claud. If they
Produce security for her appearance,
I am content.
Tit. I'll be your security.
Servius. And I.

Citizens. We'll all be your security.
(*they hold up their hands.*)
Icil. My friends,
And fellow citizens, I thank you; but
Reserve your kindness for to-morrow, friends,
If Claudius still persist—To-day I hope
He will remain content with my security,
And that of Numitorius, for the maid's
Appearance
App. See, she do appear!—and come
Prepar'd to pay the laws more reverence,
As I shall surely see that they receive it.
[*Exeunt Appius, Claudius and Lictors.*
Icil. Look up! look up! my sweet Virginia,
Look up! look up! you will see none but friends.
O that such eyes should e'er meet other prospect!
Virginia. Icilius! Uncle! lead me home! Icilius,
You did not think to take a slave to wife!—
Icil. I thought, and think to wed a free-born maid;
And thou, and thou alone, art she Virginia.
Virginia. I feel as I were so—I do not think
I am his slave! Virginius not my father!
Virginius, my dear father, not my father!
It cannot be; my life must come from him;
For, make him not my father, it will go
From me.—I could not live, an he were not
My father.
Icil. Dear Virginia, calm thy thoughts—
But who shall warn Virginius?
Num. I've ta'en care
Of that; no sooner heard I of this claim,
Than I dispatch'd thy brother Lucius,
Together with my son, to bring Virginius,
With all the speed they could; and caution'd them
(As he is something over quick of temper,
And might snatch justice, rather than sue for it;)
To evade communication of the cause,

And merely say his presence was required;
'Till we should have him with us. Come, Virginia;
Thy uncle's house shall guard thee, till thou find'st
Within thy father's arms a citadel,
Whence Claudius cannot take thee.

Icil. He shall take
A thousand lives first.

Tit. Ay, ten thousand lives.

Icil. Hear you, Virginia! Do you hear your friends?

Virginia. Let him take my life first, I am content
To be his slave then—if I am his slave.

Icil. Thou art a free-born Roman maid, Virginia;
All Rome doth know thee so, Virginia—
All Rome will see thee so.

Citizens. We will! We will!

Icil. You'll meet us here to-morrow?

Citizens. All! all!

Icil. Cease not to clamour 'gainst this outrage. Tell it
In every corner of the city; and
Let no man call himself a son of Rome,
Who stands aloof when tyranny assails
Her fairest daughter. Come, Virginia,
'Tis not a private, but a common wrong;
'Tis every father's, lover's, freeman's cause;
To-morrow! fellow citizens, to-morrow!

Citizens. To-morrow! [*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE FOURTH.

THE CAMP.

Enter S. Oppius *and* Q. F. Vibulanus.

Opp. Has he set out?

Vibul. He has, my Oppius,

And never to return! His guard 's instructed
To take good care of him. There's not a man
But's ten times sold to us, and of our wishes
Fully possess'd. Dentatus will no more
Obstruct us in our plans. He did not like
The scite of our encampment. He will find
At least the air of it was wholesome.

Opp. What
Report are they instructed to bring back?

Vibul. They fell into an ambush.---He was slain.

Opp. But should the truth, by any means, come out.

Vibul. Imprison them, and secretly despatch them,
Or ope' the dungeon doors, and let them 'scape.

Opp. I should prefer the latter method.

Vibul. Well,
That be our choice. But when it is determined
To spill blood otherwise than as it may
Be spill'd, to hesitate about some drops
Is weakness may be fatal.---Come, my friend,
Let us be seen about the camp, and ready,
With most admiring ear, to catch the tidings,
Will be the wonder of all ears, but ours.
Here's one anticipates us!

Enter MARCIUS.

Well, your news?

Marc. Dentatus is no more! but he has dearly sold his life. The matter has been reported as you directed. By few it is received with credence---by many with doubt; while some bold spirits stop not at muttering, but loudly speak suspicion of foul play. A party that we met, a mile beyond the lines, no sooner heard our story, than they set off to bring the body to the camp. Others have followed them. Fabius we have your gage for safety.

Vibul. You have.---Come, let us show ourselves.
---Guilt hides,

And we must wear the port of innocence,
That more than half way meets accusal.---Come.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE FIFTH.

A MOUNTAINOUS PASS.

The body of Dentatus discovered on a bier---Soldiers mourning over it.

Trumpets---Enter VIRGINIUS *and* SOLDIERS.

Virginius. Where is Dentatus? Where is the gallant soldier?
Ah, Comrade! comrade! warm! yet warm! So lately
Gone, when I would have given the world, only
To say farewell to thee, or even get
A parting look! O gallant, gallant soldier,
The god of war might sure have spar'd a head
Grown grey in serving him! My brave old comrade!
The father of the field! Thy silver locks
Other anointing should receive, than what
Their masters' blood could furnish!

1*st. Soldier.* There has been treachery here!

Virginius. What!

1*st. Soldier.* The slain are all our own. None of the bodies are stripp'd—These are all Romans. There is not the slightest trace of an enemy's retreat—And now I remember they made a sudden halt when we came in sight of them at the foot of the mountain—Mark'd you not, too, with what confused haste they told their story, directed us, and hurried on to the camp?

Virginius. Revenge! The Decemvirs! Ay, the Decemvirs!
For every drop of blood thou shalt have ten,
Dentatus!

Luc. (*without*) What hoa! Virginius! Virginius!

Virginius. Here! here!

Luc. (*entering*) 'Tis well you're found, Virginius!

Virginius. What makes you from the city! Look!
My Lucius, what a sight you've come to witness.
My brave old comrade! Honest Sicinius!
" Sicinius Dentatus, that true son of Rome,
On whose white locks the mother look'd more proudly
Than on the raven ones of her youngest and
Most hopeful sons, is nothing now but this,
The sign and token of himself!" Look, comrades,
Here are the foes have slain him! Not a trace
Of any other—not a body stripp'd—
Our father has been murdered—We'll revenge him
Like sons! Take up the body! Bear it to
The camp; and as you move your solemn march,
Be dumb—or if you speak, be it but a word;
And be that word—Revenge!

(*The Soldiers bear off the body—Virginius following is stopp'd by Lucius.*)

Luc. Virginius!

Virginius. I did not mind thee, Lucius!
Uncommon things make common things forgot.
Hast thou a message for me, Lucius? Well!
I'll stay and hear it—but be brief; my heart
Follows my poor Dentatus.

Luc. You are wanted
In Rome,

Virginius. On what account?

Luc. On your arrival
You'll learn.

Virginius. How! is it something can't be told
At once? Speak out boy! Ha! Your looks are loaded
With matter---I'st so heavy that your tongue
Cannot unburden them? Your brother left
The camp on duty yesterday---hath ought
Happen'd to him? Did he arrive in safety?
Is he safe? Is he well?

Luc. He is both safe and well.

Virginius. What then? What then? Tell me the matter, Lucius.

Luc. I have said
It shall be told you.

Virginius. Shall! I stay not for
That shall; unless it be so close at hand
It stop me not a moment. 'Tis too long
A coming. Fare you well, my Lucius.

Luc. Stay
Virginius.—Hear me then with patience.

Virginius. Well,
I am patient.

Luc. Your Virginia——

Virginius. Stop, my Lucius,
I am cold in every member of my frame!
If 'tis prophetic, Lucius, of thy news;
Give me such token as her tomb would, Lucius;)—
I'll bear it better.—Silence.

Luc. You are still ——

Virginia. I thank thee, Jupiter.—I am still a father!

Luc. You are, Virginius, yet.

Virginius. What, is she sick?

Luc. No.

Virginius. Neither dead nor sick? All well? No harm?
Nothing amiss? Each guarded quarter safe,
That fear may lay him down and sleep, and yet
This sounding the alarm! I swear thou tell'st

A story strangely.---Out with't! I have patience
For any thing, since my Virginia lives,
And lives in health!
Luc. You are requir'd in Rome
To answer a most novel suit.
Virginius. Whose suit?
Euc. The suit of Caius Claudius.
Virginius. Claudius!
Luc. Him that's client
To Appius Claudius, the Decemvir.
Virginius. What!
That pander! Ha! Virginia! you appear
To couple them. What makes my fair Virginia
In company with Claudius? Innocence
Beside lasciviousness! His suit! What suit?—
Answer me quickly!—Quickly! lest suspense,
Beyond what patience can endure, coercing,
Drive reason from his seat!
Luc. He has claim'd Virginia.
Virginius. Claim'd her! Claim'd her!
On what pretence?
Luc. He says she is the child
Of a slave of his, who sold her to thy wife.
Virginia. Go on, you see I'm calm.
Luc. He seiz'd her in
The school, and dragg'd her to the Forum, where
Appius was giving judgment.
Virginius. Dragg'd her to
The Forum! Well?—I told you, Lucius,
I would be patient.
Luc. Numitorius there confronted him!
Virginius. Did he not strike him dead?
True, true, I know it was in presence of
The Decemvir—O! had I confronted him!
Well! well! The issue—Well!—O'erleap all else,
And light upon the issue! Where is she?
Luc. I was despatch'd to fetch thee, ere I could
learn.

Virginius. The claim of Claudius—Appius's client—Ha!
I see the master cloud—this ragged one,
That lowers before, moves only in subservience
To the ascendant of the other—Jove
With its own mischief, break it, and disperse it,
And that be all the ruin! Patience! Prudence!
Nay prudence, but no patience.—Come! a slave
Dragg'd through the streets in open day! my child!
My daughter! my fair daughter, in the eyes
Of Rome! O! I'll be patient. Come! The essence
Of my best blood in the free common ear
Condemn'd as vile! O! I'll be patient. Come,
O they shall wonder.—I will be so patient.
[*Exeunt.*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE FIRST.

NUMITORIUS'S HOUSE.

VIRGINIA *discovered, supported by* SERVIA.

Virginia. Is he not yet arriv'd? Will he not
come?
Servia. He surely will.
Virginia. He surely will! More surely
He had arriv'd already, had he known
How he is wanted—"They have miss'd him, Servia!
Don't tell me, but I know they have, or surely
We had not now been looking for him." Where's
My uncle?
Servia. Finding you had fallen asleep
After such watching, he went forth to hear
If there were any tidings of Virginius.
He's here.

Enter NUMITORIUS, *Virginia looks at him inquisitively for some time.*

Virginia. Not come! not come! I am
sure of it!
He will not come! Do you not think he'll come?
Will not my father come? What think you, uncle?
Speak to me, speak—O give me any words,
Rather than what looks utter!

Numitorius. Be compos'd!
I hope he'll come!
Virginia. A little while ago
You were sure of it—from certainty to hope
Is a poor step; you hope he'll come—One hope,
One little hope to face a thousand fears!
"Do you not know he'll come? O uncle, wherefore
Do you not know he'll come? Had I been you
I had made sure of it.
Numitorius. All has been done
That could be done.
Virginia. Poor all that does so little!
One would imagine little needs be done
To bring a father to the succour of
His child!" 'Tis near the time!
Numitorius. It is indeed!
Virginia. Must I go forth with you? Must I again
Be dragg'd along by Claudius as his slave,
And none again to succour me? Icilius!
Icilius! Does your true betroth'd wife
Call on you, and you hear not? My Icilius!
Am I to be your wife or Claudius' slave?
Where—where are you Icilius?
ICILIUS (*entering*). My Virginia!
What's to be done, my friend? 'tis almost time.
[*To Numitorius.*
Virginia. I hear what you are saying—it is time—
"O who could have believed it, that Icilius
Should ever say 'twas time to yield me to
Another's claim"—And will you give me up?
Can you devise no means to keep me from him?
Could we not fly?
[*Icilius looks earnestly at Numitorius, who fixes his eyes stedfastly on the ground: Icilius droops his head.*
I see!—your pledge

Must be redeem'd, although it cost you your
Virginia.
Virginius (without). Is she here?
Virginia. Ah!
[*Shrieks and rushes into her father's arms, who enters at the moment.*
Virginius. My child! My child!
Virginia. I am! I feel I am! I know I am!
My father! my dear father. "I despair'd
Of seeing you!" You're come! and come in time.
And, O! how much the more in time, when hope
Had given you up. "O! welcome, welcome foot,
Whose wished step is heard when least expected!"
Virginius. Brother! Icilius! thank you! thank you.—All
Has been communicated to me. Ay!
And would they take thee from me? Let them try it!
You've ta'en your measures well—I scarce could pass
Along, so was I check'd by loving hands
Ready to serve me. Hands with hearts in them!
So thou art Claudius' slave? And if thou art,
I'm surely not thy father! Blister'd villain!
You have warn'd our neighbours, have you not, to attend
As witnesses? To be sure you have. A fool!
To ask the question. Dragg'd along the streets too!
'Twas very kind in him to go himself
And fetch thee—such an honour should not pass
Without acknowledgment. I shall return it
In full! In full!
Numitorius. Pray you be prudent, brother.
Virginia. Dear father, be advis'd—Will you not, father?
Virginius. I never saw you look so like your mother
In all my life!
Virginia. You'll be advis'd, dear father?

Virginius. It was her soul—her soul, that play'd just then
About the features of her child, and lit them
Into the likeness of her own. When first
She plac'd thee in my arms—I recollect it
As a thing of yesterday!—she wish'd, she said,
That it had been a man. I answer'd her,
It was the mother of a race of men,
And paid her for thee with a kiss. Her lips
Are cold now—could they but be warm'd again
How they would clamour for thee!
Virginia. My dear father,
You do not answer me! Will you not be advis'd?
Virginius. I will not take him by the throat and strangle him!
But I could do it! I could do it! Fear not:
I will not strike while any head I love
Is in the way. It is not now a time
To tell thee—but, would'st thou believe it!—honest
Sicinius Dentatus has been murder'd by them.
Icilius. Murder'd!
Numitorius. Dentatus murder'd!
Virginia. O! how much
Have we to fear,
Virginius. We have the less to fear.
I spread the news at every step—A fire
Is kindled, that will blaze at but a breath
Into the fiercest flame!
Numitorius. 'Tis time. Let's haste
To the Forum,
Virginius. Let the Forum wait for us!
Put on no show of fear, when villany
Would wrestle with you! It can keep its feet
Only with cowards! I shall walk along
Slowly and calmly, with my daughter thus
In my hand: though with another kind of gripe
Than that which Claudius gave her. Well, I say,
I'll walk along thus, in the eyes of Rome.
Go you before, and what appeal soe'er

You please, make you to rouse up friends. For me,
I shall be mute—my eloquence is here—
Her tears—her youth—her innocence—her beauty.
If orators like these can't move the heart,
Tongues surely may be dumb.
Icilius. A thousand hearts
Have spoke already in her cause!
Virginius. Come on!
Fear not! it is your father's grasp you feel.
O he'll be strong as never man was, that
Will take thee from it. Come, Virginia;
We trust our cause to Rome and to the gods!
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE THIRD.

THE FORUM.

Enter APPIUS *and* LICTORS.

Appius. See you keep back the people! Use your fasces
With firmer hands, or hearts. Your hands are firm
Enough, would but your hearts perform their office,
"And leave your hands at liberty, not hang
Upon them with unseemly fears and clamours!"
Look to it! "Time! hadst thou the theme that I have
For speed, thou would'st not move this cripple's gait:
But there's no urging thee, and thou wast ever
Dull fellow traveller to young Impatience,
Dragging him back upon the road he pants
To run, but cannot find without thee."
[*Enter Marcus.*
Well?
Marcus. News has arriv'd, that speaks as if Dentatus

Was murder'd by the order of your colleagues!
There's not a face I meet but lowers with it:
The streets are fill'd with thronging groups, that, as
You pass, grow silent, and look sullen round on you,
Then fall again to converse.

Appius. 'Tis ill tim'd.

Marcus. What say you, Appius?

Appius. Murder's ill tim'd, I say,
Happen when 'twill; but now is most ill tim'd,
When Rome is in a ferment, on account
Of Claudius, and this girl he calls his slave;
"For come when evil will, or how it will,
All's laid to our account!" Look out and see
If Claudius be approaching yet. [*Exit Marcus.*
"My wish,
Like an officious friend, comes out of time
To tell me of success. I had rather far
It had miscarried—they run high enough;
They wanted not this squall on squall to raise them
Above their present swell—the waves run high
Enough, through which we steer;—but such a haven,
If won, can never be too dearly won!"

Marcus (*entering.*) Claudius is here!

Enter CLAUDIUS.

Appius. Well, Claudius, are the forces
At hand?

Claudius. They are, and timely too; the people
Are in unwonted ferment.

Appius. I have heard
Word has arriv'd of old Dentatus' death;
Which, as I hear, and wonder not to hear it,
The mutinous citizens lay to our account.

Claudius. That's bad enough; yet—

Appius. Ha! what's worse?

Claudius. 'Tis best
At once to speak what you must learn at last,
Yet last of all would learn.

Appius. Virginius!

Claudius. Yes!
He has arriv'd in Rome.
Marcus. They are coming, Appius.
Claudius. Fly, Marcus, hurry down the forces!
(*Exit Marcus.*) Appius,
Be not o'erwhelm'd!
Appius. There's something awes me at
The thought of looking on her father!
Claudius. Look
Upon her, my Appius! Fix your gaze upon
The treasures of her beauty, nor avert it
Till they are thine. Haste! Your tribunal!
Haste!

[*Appius ascends his tribunal. Enter* NUMITORIUS, ICILIUS, LUCIUS, CITIZENS, VIRGINIUS *leading his Daughter,* SERVIA, *and* CITIZENS. *A dead silence prevails.*

Virginius. Does no one speak? I am defendant here.
Is silence my opponent? Fit opponent
To plead a cause too foul for speech! What brow
Shameless gives front to this most valiant cause,
That tries its prowess 'gainst the honour of
A girl; yet lacks the wit to know, that they
Who cast off shame should likewise cast off fear—
" And on the verge o' the combat wants the nerve
To stammer forth the signal ?"
Appius. You had better,
Virginius, wear another kind of carriage.
This is not of the fashion that will serve you.
Virginius. The fashion, Appius! Appius Claudius, tell me
The fashion it becomes a man to speak in,
Whose property in his own child—the offspring
Of his own body, near to him as is
His hand, his arm—yea, nearer—closer far—
Knit to his heart—I say, who has his property
In such a thing, the very self of himself,

Disputed; and I'll speak so, Appius Claudius;
I'll speak so—Pray you tutor me!
Appius. Stand forth,
Claudius! If you lay claim to any interest
In the question now before us, speak; if not,
Bring on some other cause.
Claudius. Most noble Appius—
Virginius. And are you the man
That claims my daughter for his slave?—Look at me,
And I will give her to thee.
Claudius. She is mine, then:
Do I not look at you?
Virginius. Your eye does, truly,
But not your soul.—I see it through your eye
Shifting and shrinking—turning every way
To shun me. "You surprise me, that your eye,
So long the bully of its master, knows not
To put a proper face upon a lie,
But gives the port of impudence to falsehood,
When it would pass it off for truth." Your soul
Dares as soon show its face to me. Go on,
I had forgot; the fashion of my speech
May not please Appius Claudius.
Claudius. I demand
Protection of the Decemvir!
Appius. You shall have it.
Virginius. Doubtless!
Appius. Keep back the people, Lictors! What's
Your plea? You say the girl's your slave—Produce
Your proofs.
Claudius. My proof is here, which, if they can,
Let them confront. The mother of the girl—
[*Virginius, stepping forward to speak, is withheld by Numitorius.*
Numitorius. Hold, brother! Hear them out, or suffer me
To speak.
Virginius. Man, I must speak, or else go mad!

And if I do go mad, what then will hold me
From speaking? "Wer't not better, brother,
think you,
To speak and not go mad, than to go mad
And then to speak?" She was thy sister, too!
Well, well, speak thou.—I'll try, and if I can
Be silent. (*Retires.*)

Numitorius. Will she swear she is her child?

Virginius. (*Starting forward.*) To be sure she
will—a most wise question that!
Is she not his slave! Will his tongue lie for him—
Or his hand steal—or the finger of his hand
Beckon, or point, or shut, or open for him?
To ask him if she'll swear!—Will she walk or run,
Sing, dance, or wag her head; do any thing
That is most easy done? She'll as soon swear!
What mockery it is to have one's life
In jeopardy by such a bare-fac'd trick!
Is it to be endur'd? I do protest
Against her oath!

Appius. No law in Rome, Virginius,
Seconds you. If she swear the girl's her child,
The evidence is good, unless confronted
By better evidence. Look you to that,
Virginius. I shall take the woman's oath.

Virginia. Icilius!

Icilius. Fear not, love; a thousand oaths
Will answer her.

Appius. You swear the girl's your child,
And that you sold her to Virginius' wife,
Who pass'd her for her own. Is that your oath?

Slave. It is my oath.

Appius. Your answer now, Virginius.

Virginius. Here it is!
[*Brings Virginia forward.*
Is this the daughter of a slave? I know
'Tis not with men, as shrubs and trees, that by
The shoot you know the rank and order of
The stem. Yet who from such a stem would look

For such a shoot. My witnesses are these—
The relatives and friends of Numitoria,
Who saw her, ere Virginia's birth, sustain
(The burden which a mother bears, nor feels
The weight, with longing for the sight of it).
Here are the ears that listen'd to her sighs
In nature's hour of labour, which subsides
In the embrace of joy—the hands, that when
The day first look'd upon the infant's face,
And never look'd so pleas'd, help'd them up to it,
And bless'd her for a blessing—Here, the eyes
That saw her lying at the generous
And sympathetic fount, that at her cry
Sent forth a stream of liquid living pearl
To cherish her enamell'd veins. The lie
Is most unfruitful then, that takes the flower—
The very flower our bed connubial grew—
To prove its barrenness! Speak for me, friends;
Have I not spoke the truth.

Women and Citizens. You have, Virginius.

Appius. Silence! keep silence there.—No more of that!
You're very ready for a tumult, citizens.
[*Troops appear behind.*
Lictors, make way to let these troops advance!
We have had a taste of your forbearance, masters,
And wish not for another.

Virginius. Troops in the Forum!

Appius. Virginius, have you spoken?

Virginius. If you have heard me,
I have; if not, I'll speak again.

Appius. You need not,
Virginius; I have evidence to give,
Which, should you speak a hundred times again,
Would make your pleading vain.

Virginius. Your hand, Virginia!
Stand close to me. (*Aside.*)

Appius. My conscience will not let me
Be silent. 'Tis notorious to you all,

That Claudius' father, at his death, declar'd me
The guardian of his son—This cheat has long
Been known to me. I know the girl is not
Virginius' daughter.

Virginius. Join your friends, Icilius,
And leave Virginia to my care. (*Aside.*)

Appius. "The justice
I should have done my client, unrequir'd,
Now cited by him, how shall I refuse?"

Virginius. Don't tremble, girl! don't tremble. (*Aside.*)

Appius. Virginius,
I feel for you; but, though you were my father,
The majesty of justice should be sacred—
Claudius must take Virginia home with him!

Virginius. And if he must, I should advise him, Appius,
To take her home in time, before his guardian
Complete the violation, which his eyes
Already have begun—Friends! Fellow Citizens!
Look not on Claudius—Look on your Decemvir!
He is the master claims Virginia!
The tongues that told him she was not my child
Are these—the costly charms he cannot purchase,
Except by making her the slave of Claudius,
His client, his purveyor, that caters for
His pleasures—markets for him—picks, and scents,
And tastes, that he may banquet—serves him up
His sensual feast, and is not now asham'd,
In the open, common street, before your eyes—
Frighting your daughters and your matrons' cheeks
With blushes they ne'er thought to meet—to help him
To the honour of a Roman maid! my child!
Who now clings to me, as you see, as if
This second Tarquin had already coil'd
His arms around her. Look upon her, Romans!
Befriend her! succour her! see her not polluted
Before her father's eyes!—He is but one!

Tear her from Appius and his Lictors, while
She is unstain'd—Your hands! your hands! your hands!

Citizens. They are yours, Virginius.

Appius. Keep the people back—
Support my Lictors, soldiers! Seize the girl,
And drive the people back.

Icilius. Down with the slaves!

[*The people make a show of resistance, but, upon the advancing of the soldiers, retreat, and leave Icilius, Virginius, and his Daughter, &c., in the hands of Appius and his party.*

Deserted!—Cowards! Traitors! "Let me free
But for a moment! I relied on you;
Had I relied upon myself alone
I had kept them still at bay! I kneel to you—
Let me but loose a moment, if 'tis only
To rush upon your swords!"

Virginius. Icilius, peace!
You see how 'tis, we are deserted, left
Alone by our friends, surrounded by our enemies,
Nerveless and helpless*.

Appius. Separate them, Lictors!

Virginius. Let them forbear awhile, I pray you, Appius:
It is not very easy. Though her arms
Are tender, yet the hold is strong, by which
She grasps me, Appius. Forcing them will hurt them,
They'll soon unclasp themselves. Wait but a little—
You know you're sure of her!

Appius. I have not time
To idle with thee, give her to my Lictors.

Virginius. Appius, I pray you wait! If she's not
My child, she hath been like a child to me
For fifteen years. If I am not her father
I have been like a father to her, Appius,

* *Appius.* Away with him!
Icilius. Virginia! Tyrant! My Virginia!
Appius. Away with him, &c. [*Icilius is borne off.*

For even such a time. "They that have liv'd
So long a time together, in so near
And dear society, may be allow'd
A little time for parting." Let me take
The maid aside, I pray you, and confer
A moment with her nurse; perhaps she'll give me
Some token, will unloose a tie, so twin'd
And knotted round my heart, that if you break it
My heart breaks with it.

Appius. Have your wish. Be brief!
Lictors! look to them.

Virginia. Do you go from me!
Do you leave! Father! Father!

Virginius. No, my child;
No, my Virginia—come along with me.

Virginia. Will you not leave me? Will you take me with you?
Will you take me home again? O, bless you, bless you!
My father! my dear father! Art thou not
My father!

[*Virginius, perfectly at a loss what to do, looks anxiously around the Forum; at length his eye falls on a butcher's stall, with a knife upon it.*

Virginius. This way, my child—No, no! I am not going
To leave thee, my Virginia! I'll not leave thee.

Appius. "Keep back the people, soldiers! Let them not
Approach Virginius! Keep the people back!"

[*Virginius secures the knife.*

Well, have you done?

Virginius. Short time for converse, Appius;
But I have.

Appius. I hope you are satisfied.

Virginius. I am—
I am—that she is my daughter!

Appius. Take her, Lictors!

[*Virginia shrieks, and falls half dead upon her father's shoulder.*

Virginius. Another moment, pray you. Bear with me
A little—'Tis my last embrace. 'Twont try
Your patience beyond bearing, if you're a man!
Lengthen it as I may I cannot make it
Long! My dear child! My dear Virginia!
[*kissing her.*
There is one only way to save thine honour—
'Tis this!—
[*Stabs her, and draws out the knife. Icilius breaks from the soldiers that held him, and catches her.*
Lo! Appius! with this innocent blood,
I do devote thee to th' infernal gods!
Make way there!
Appius. Stop him! Seize him!
Virginius. If they dare
To tempt the desperate weapon that is madden'd
With drinking my daughter's blood, why let them: Thus
It rushes in amongst them. Way there! Way!
[*Exit through the soldiers.*

" *Enter* HONORIUS *and* VALERIUS.

Honorius. What tumult's this?——
The fair Virginia
Kill'd by her father's hand, to save her from
The lust of Appius Claudius? Most foul cause,
That makes so dark a deed look fair!
Appius. Remove
The body, Lictors.
Icilius. At the peril of
Their lives! Death is abroad, at work, and most
In earnest when with such a feat as this
He opens his exploits!
Appius. Obey me, slaves!
Honorius. Defend the body, freemen. There's a spark
Remaining still, which, though not strong enough
To light it up with its own beauteous life,

May yet rekindle liberty, and save
Expiring Rome!

Citizens. It shall not be removed!

Appius. Seize it, I say!

Valerius. Back, slaves! Give place to freemen!

[*A tumult ensues; the people deprive the Lictors of their fasces, and drive them, with the soldiers, with Appius Claudius, &c., off the stage, then return shouting.*

Icilius. Ay, shout, and shout: a far more glorious cause
Call'd for your voices, and you had not then
The breath to whisper. How that ear had thank'd you,
Had you as tender been of the jewel of
Its precious sense as of the empty casket!

Honorius. A litter, Citizens, to lift the body,
And bear it through the streets, a spectacle
Will fill all eyes with tears, all hearts with fire!

Icilius. No hand but mine shall touch it: I will be
Its living bier.

Honorius. Icilius, listen to me!
Thou art not now thyself, and knowest not
There is a sweeter strain than that of grief—
Revenge, that drowns it. Suffer us to bear
Thy bride along the streets; a second, but
Unstain'd Lucretia, buying with her blood
The life of Rome and freedom!

Icilius. Rome and freedom!
There is your ransom! such a costly one—
O, you are dear, to be so dearly won! [*Exeunt.*"

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE FIRST.

A STREET.

Enter APPIUS *and* MARCUS.

Appius. I do abjure all further league with them:
They have most basely yielded up their pow'r,
" And compromis'd their glory. Had they died
In their high seats, they had liv'd demi-gods;
But now they live to die like basest men!"
Power gone, life follows! Well! tis well we know
The worst! The worst?—The worst is yet to come,
And if I err not, hither speeds a messenger
Whose heel it treads upon.

Enter VIBULANUS, *hastily, and other Decemvirs, with* MARCUS.

Vibulanus. Honorius and Valerius are elected
To the Consulate.—Virginius is made Tribune.
Appius. " No doubt they'd fill their offices, when ours
Were laid so poorly down.—You have acted wisely!

Vibulanus. Who could resist Virginius, raving at
The head of the revolted troops, with all
The commons up in arms? Waste not dear time!
Look to your safety, Appius. 'Tis resolv'd
To cite you instantly before the Consuls.
Appius. Look to my safety, say you? You would bid
A man, that's tumbling from a precipice
A hundred fathoms high, and midway down,
Look to his safety! What has he to snatch at?
Air!—E'en so much have I.
Vibulanus. Withdraw awhile
From Rome. We shall recal you with applause
And honours.
Appius. Yes! You saw me on the brink—
Beheld it giving way beneath my feet—
And saw me tottering o'er the hideous leap,
Whose sight sent round the brain with madd'ning whirl,
With but a twig to stay me, which you cut,
Because it was your friend that hung by it—
Most kindly.
Vibulanus. Nay," employ the present time
In looking to your safety—" that secur'd,
Reproach us as you will."
Appius. I am in your hands,
Lead me which way you please.
Icilius (without). Hold! Stand.

ICILIUS *enters, with* NUMITORIUS *and* LICTORS.

Did I not tell you 'twas the tyrant? Look,
Was I not right? I felt that he was present
Ere mine eye told it me.—You are our prisoner.
Appius. Your prisoner! On what pretence, Icilius?

Icilius. Inquire of your audacious deeds, "that laid
Your country's liberties prostrate." Not to speak
Of any private wrong—but to reply
Touching a private wrong—inquire of poor
Virginius, tottering between despair
And madness, as he seeks the home, where once
He found a daughter!

Appius. I demand due time
To make up my defence.

Icilius. Demand due time!
Appius!—Assign the cause, why you denied
A Roman maid, of free condition,
Her liberty provisionally, while
Her plea remain'd unjudg'd. No answer, Appius?
Lictors, lay hold upon him—to prison with him!
Look to him well. To prison with the tyrant!

[*Exeunt Appius and Lictors on one side, Icilius and Numitorius on the other.*

Vibulanus. Let all his friends, that their own safety prize,
Solicit straight for his enlargement; doff
Their marks of station, and to the vulgar eye
Disguise it with the garb of mourning: 'twill
Conciliate the crowd.—We know them well:
But humour them, they are water soon as fire!

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE SECOND.

VIRGINIUS'S HOUSE.

Enter LUCIUS *and* SERVIA.

Lucius. Is he not yet come home?
Servia. Not since her death.
I dread his coming home, good Lucius.
Lucius. A step! 'Tis Numitorius and Virginius.
Servia. Gods! how he looks!—See, Lucius, how he looks!

Enter VIRGINIUS, *attended by* NUMITORIUS *and others.*

Virginius. 'Tis ease! 'tis ease! I am content!
'Tis peace,
'Tis any thing that is most soft and quiet.
And after such a dream!—I want my daughter;
Send me my daughter!
Numitorius. Yes, his reason's gone.
Scarce had he come in sight of his once sweet
And happy home, ere with a cry he fell
As one struck dead.—When to himself he came,
We found him as you see. How is it, brother?
Virginius. How should it be but well? Our cause is good.
Think you Rome will stand by, and see a man
Robb'd of his child? We are bad enough, but yet
They should not so mistake us. "We are slaves,
But not yet monsters."—Call my daughter to me.

What keeps her thus? I never stept within
The threshold yet, without her meeting me
With a kiss. She's very long a coming. Call
her!

Numitorius. Icilius comes! See, my Icilius, see!

Enter ICILIUS.

Virginius. Come, come, make ready. Brother,
you and he
Go on before: I'll bring her after you.

Icilius. Ha!

Numitorius. My Icilius, what a sight is there!
Virginius' reason is a wreck, so stripp'd
And broken up by wave and wind, you scarce
Would know it was the gallant bark you saw
Riding so late in safety!

Icilius (taking Virginius's hand). Father! Father!
That art no more a father!

Virginius. Ha! what wet
Is this upon my hand? A tear, boy! Fie,
For shame! Is that the weapon you would guard
Your bride with? First essay what steel can do!

Numitorius. Not a tear has bless'd his eye since
her death! "No wonder.
The fever of his brain, that now burns out,
Has drunk the source of sorrow's torrents dry.

Icilius. You would not have it otherwise?
'Twas fit
The bolt, that struck the sole remaining branch,
And blasted it, should set the trunk on fire!"

Numitorius. If we could make him weep—

Icilius. I have that will make him,
If aught will do it. 'Tis her urn. 'Twas that
Which first drew tears from me. I'll fetch it. But
I cannot think you wise, to wake a man
Who's at the mercy of a tempest. Better
You suffer him to sleep it through. [*Exit Icilius.*

Virginius. Gather your friends together: tell them of
Dentatus' murder. Screw the chord of rage
To the topmost pitch. Mine own is not mine own! *(laughs)*
That's strange enough. Why does he not dispute
My right to my own flesh, and tell my heart
Its blood is not its own? He might as well. *(laughs)*
But I want my child.

Enter Lucius.

Lucius. Justice will be defeated!
Virginius. Who says that?
He lies in the face of the gods! She is immutable,
Immaculate, and immortal! And though all
The guilty globe should blaze, she will spring up
Through the fire, and soar above the crackling pile,
With not a downy feather ruffled by
Its fierceness!
Numitorius. He is not himself! What new
Oppression comes to tell us to our teeth,
We only mock'd ourselves to think the days
Of thraldom past?
Lucius. The friends of Appius
Beset the people with solicitations.
The fickle crowd, that change with every change,
Begin to soften; "doubtless that the stones,
They wont to vent their griefs to, turn to flesh,
Touch'd by their own calamity." Each moment
That's lost a friend is lost. Appear among
Your friends, or lose them!
Numitorius. Lucius, you
Remain, and watch Virginius.
[*Exit, followed by all but Lucius and Servia.*
Virginius. You remember,
Don't you, nurse?
Servia. What, Virginius?

Virginius. That she nurs'd
The child herself. "Inquire among your gossips,
Which of them saw it; and, with such of them
As can avouch the fact, without delay
Repair to the forum." Will she come or not?
I'll call myself! — She will not dare! —O when
Did my Virginia dare — Virginia!
Is it a voice, or nothing answers me?
I hear a sound so fine — there's nothing lives
'Twixt it and silence. "Such a slender one
I've heard when I have talk'd with her in fancy!
A phantom sound!" Aha! She is not here!
They told me she was here: they have deceiv'd me;
And Appius was not made to give her up,
But keeps her, and effects his wicked purpose,
While I stand talking here, and ask you if
My daughter is my daughter! Though a legion
Sentried that brothel, which he calls his palace,
I'd tear her from him!

Lucius. Hold, Virginius! Stay!
Appius is now in prison.

Virginius. With my daughter!
He has secur'd her there! Ha! has he so?
Gay office for a dungeon! Hold me not,
Or I will dash you down, and spoil you for
My keeper. My Virginia, struggle with him!
Appal him with thy shrieks; ne'er faint, ne'er faint!
I am coming to thee! I am coming to thee!

[*Virginius rushes out, followed by Lucius, Servia, and others.*

SCENE FOURTH.

A DUNGEON.

APPIUS *discovered.*

Appius. From the palace to the dungeon is a road
Trod oft, not oft retrod. What hope have I
To pace it back again? I know of none.
I am as one that's dead! "The dungeon, that
Encloses fallen greatness, may as well
Be call'd its tomb." I am as much the carcass
Of myself, as if the string were taken from
My neck. Their hands long for the office. O,
'Tis worth the half of a Plebeian's life
To get his greasy fingers on the throat
Of a Patrician! But I'll balk them. Come!
Appius shall have an executioner
No less illustrious than himself.

[*He is on the point of swallowing poison, when Vibulanus enters.*

Who's there?
Vibulanus Your friend!
Appius. My Vibulanus!
Vibulanus. Appius, what
Was that you hid in such confusion as
I enter'd?
Appius. 'Tis a draught for life, which, swallow'd,
She relishes so richly, that she cares not
If she ne'er drink again! Here's health to you!
Vibulanus. Not out of such a cup as that, my Appius.
"Despair, that bids you drink it, as the cure
Of canker'd life, but lies to you, and turns

Your eyes from hope, that even now stands ready
With outstretch'd arms to rush to your embrace."
Your friends are busy for you with your foes—
Your foes become your friends. Where'er a frown
Appears against you, nothing's spar'd to make
The wearer doff it, and put up a smile
In its stead. "Your colleague Oppius is in prison.
Your client too. Their harm's your safety: it
Distracts the appetite o' the dogs. They drop
The morsel they took up before, as soon
As a new one's thrown to them."

Appius. Thou giv'st me life
Indeed!

Vibulanus. That I may give thee life indeed,
I'll waste no longer time with thee; "for that
Already taken to assure thee of
Thy fast reviving fortunes, cheats them of
The aid should help to re-establish them."
Farewell, my Appius! If my absence takes
A friend from thee, it leaves one with thee—Hope!
[*Exit.*

Appius. And I will clasp it to me! Never friend
Made sweeter promises. But snatch me from
Beneath the feet of the vile herd, that's now
Broke loose and roams at large, I'll show them who
They'd trample on. "Hope! Hope! They say of thee,
Thou art a friend that promises, but cares not
To keep his word. This once keep thine with Appius,
And he will give thee out so true a tongue,
Thy word is bond enough!"—At liberty!
Again at liberty! O give me power
As well, for every minute of my thraldom
I'll pick a victim from the common herd
Shall groan his life in bondage. "Liberty!

'Tis triumph, power, dominion, every thing!"
Are ye not open yet, ye servile gates?
Let fall your chains, and push your bolts aside!
It is your past and future lord commands you!
Virginius (rushing in.) Give me my daughter!
Appius. Ha!
Virginius. My child! my daughter!
My daughter! my Virginia! Give her me!
Appius. Thy daughter!
Virginius. Ay! Deny that she is mine
And I will strangle thee, unless the lie
Should choke thee first.
Appius. Thy daughter!
Virginius. Play not with me!
Provoke me not! Equivocate, and lo!
Thou sport'st with fire. I am wild, distracted, mad!
I am all a flame—a flame! I tell thee once
For all, I want my child, and I will have her;
So give her to me.
Appius. Cag'd with a madman! Hoa!
Without there!
Virginius. Not a step thou stirr'st from hence,
Till I have found my child. "Attempt that noise
Again, and I will stop the vent, that not
A squeak shall pass it. There are plugs for you
Will keep it air-tight (*showing his fingers*)." Please you, give me back
My daughter.
Appius. In truth she is not here, Virginius;
Or I would give her to thee.
Virginius. Would? Ay, should!
Tho' would were would not. Do you say, indeed
She is not here? You nothing know of her?
Appius. Nothing, Virginius! good Virginius, nothing.
Virginius. How if I thrust my hand into your breast,

And tore your heart out, and confronted it
With your tongue? I'd like it. Shall we try it?
Fool!
Are not the ruffians leagued? The one would swear
To the tale o' the other.
Appius. By the gods, Virginius,
Your daughter is not in my keeping.
Virginius. Well,
Then I must seek her elsewhere. I did dream
That I had murder'd her—You lie! 'twas but
A dream—She isn't here, you say—Well! well!
Then I must go and seek her elsewhere—Yet
She's not at home—and where else should I seek her
But there or here? Here! here! here! Yes, I say,
But there or here—I tell you I must find her—
She must be here, or what do you here? What,
But such a wonder of rich beauty could
Deck out a dungeon so as to despoil
A palace of its tenant? Art thou not
The tyrant Appius?—Did'st thou not decree
My daughter to be Claudius' slave, who gave her
To his master? Have you not secur'd her here
To compass her dishonour, ere her father
Arrives to claim her?
Appius. No.
Virginius. Do you tell me so?
Vile tyrant! Think you, shall I not believe
My own eyes before your tongue? Why, there she is!
There at your back—her locks dishevell'd and
Her vestment torn! Her cheeks all faded with
Her pouring tears, "as flowers with too much rain!"
Her form no longer kept and treasur'd up,
"By her maiden-pride, like a rich casket, cast

Aside, neglected and forgot, because
The richer gem was shrin'd in it is lost!"
Villain! is this a sight to show a father?
And have I not a weapon to requite thee?
[*Searches about his clothes.*
Ha! here are ten!

Appius. Keep down your hands! Help! help!

Virginius. No other look but that! Look on! look on!
It turns my very flesh to steel—Brave girl!
Keep thine eye fix'd—let it not twink—Look on!
[*Exeunt, struggling.*

Enter NUMITORIUS, ICILIUS, LUCIUS, *Guard, and Soldier bearing Virginia's Urn.*

Numitorius. Not here!

Lucius. Is this the dungeon?—Appius is not here,
Nor yet Virginius. You have sure mistaken.

Guard. This is the dungeon—Here Virginius entered.

Numitorius. Yet is not here!—Hush! The abode of death
Is just as silent. Gods! should the tyrant take
The father's life, in satisfaction for
The deed that robb'd him of the daughter's charms—
Hush! hark! A groan! There's something stirs.

Lucius. 'Tis this way!

Numitorius. Come on! Protect him, gods, or pardon me
If with my own hand I revenge his death.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE FIFTH.

ANOTHER DUNGEON.

VIRGINIUS *discovered on one knee, with* APPIUS *lying dead before him. Enter* NUMITORIUS, ICILIUS, LUCIUS, *Citizens, and others.*

Numitorius. What's here? Virginius! with the tyrant prostrate and dead!

Lucius. His senses are benumb'd; there is no adit to his mind, by which our words can reach it. Help to raise him: the motion may recal perception.

Numitorius. His eye is not so deathlike fix'd: it moves a little.

Lucius. Speak to him, Numitorius; he knows your voice the best.

Numitorius. Virginius!

Lucius. I think he hears you; speak again.

Numitorius. Virginius!

Virginius. Ah!

Lucius. That sigh has burst the spell which held him.

Numitorius. Virginius! my dear brother!

Virginius. Lighter! lighter! My heart is ten times lighter! What a load it has heav'd off! Where is he? I thought I had done it.

Numitorius. Virginius!

Virginius. Well, who are you? What do you want? I'll answer what I've done.

Numitorius. Do you not know me, brother? Speak, Icilius, try if he knows you.

Icilius. Virginius!

Numitorius. Virginius!

Virginius. That voice—that voice—I know that voice!

It minds me of a voice was coupled with it,
And made such music, once to hear it was
Enough to make it, ever after be
Remembered! (*Icilius places the urn in his hand.*)
What's this?

Icilius. Virginia!

[*Virginius looks alternately at Icilius and the Urn—looks at Numitorius and Lucius—seems particularly struck by his mourning—looks at the Urn again—bursts into a passion of tears, and exclaims,* "VIRGINIA!"—*Falls on Icilius's neck. Curtain drops.*

END OF THE FIFTH ACT.

EPILOGUE,

BY

BARRY CORNWALL, Esq.

Spoken by Miss Brunton.

LEAVING the common path, which many tread,
We will not wake with jokes our poets dead:
Nor shame the young creations of his pen,
By bidding all, who've perish'd, be again.
The pale Virginia, in her bloody shroud,
Lies like a shrined saint.—Oh! then, aloud
Shall we break scurril jests, and bid depart
Those thoughts of her, which fill and teach the heart?
No moral now we offer, squar'd in form,
But Pity, like the sun-light, bright and warm,
Comes mix'd with showers; and, fading, leaves behind
A beauty and a blossom on the mind.
We do not strain to show that "thus it grows."
And "hence we learn" what every body knows:
But casting idle dogmas (words) aside,
We paint a villain in his purple pride;
And tearing down a pow'r, that grew too bold,
Show—merely what was done in days of old.
Leaving this image on the soul, we go
Unto our gentler story, touch'd with woe;
(With woe that wantons not, nor wears away
The heart) and love too perfect for decay.
But whatsoe'er we do, we will not shame
Your better feeling, with an idle game
Of grin and mimicry (a loathsome task);
Or strip the great Muse of her mighty mask,
And hoot her from her throne of tears and sighs,
Until, from folly and base jest, she dies.
No; let her life be long, her reign supreme—
If but a dream, it is a glorious dream.
Dwell then upon our tale; and bear along
With you, deep thoughts—of love—of bitter wrong—
Of freedom—of sad pity—and lust of pow'r.
The tale is fitted for an after hour.

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